

AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

P S A L M S.

WE have now before us one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of GOD and his law, that it has been called *the abstract, or summary, of both Testaments*. The History of Israel, which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of GOD. The book of Job brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning GOD and his providence; but this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers, of this world, and directs us into communion with GOD, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up, and letting out, our hearts toward him. Thus may we be in the mount with GOD; and we understand not ourselves, if we say not, *It is good to be here.*

Let us consider,

- I. The title of this book. It is called, 1. *The Psalms*; under that title it is referred to, Luke xxiv. 44. The Hebrew calls it *Tehillim*, which properly signifies *Psalms of praise*; because many of them are such: but *Psalms* is a more general word, meaning all metrical compositions fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal, or supplicatory, as laudatory. Though express and to excite all the other affections, as well as this of joy. The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones; and the divine institution of singing psalms is thus largely displayed; for we are directed, not only to praise GOD, but to teach and admonish ourselves and one another in *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*, Col. iii. 16. 2. It is called the *Book of Psalms*; so it is quoted by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired, which, though composed at several times and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to, or dependence upon, one another; thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and laid in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good Master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put in our mouths, and songs prepared to our hands.
- II. The Author of this book. It is, no doubt, derived originally from the Blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost taught. The penman of most of them was David, the son of Jesse, who is therefore called the *sweet Psalmist of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles, yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere; as Ps. ii. (Acts iv. 25.) and Ps. xcvi. cv. (1 Chron. xvi.) One psalm is expressly said to be *the prayer of Moses*; (Ps. xc.) and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph, is intimated, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. where they are said to *praise the Lord in the words of David, and Asaph*, who is there called a *seer or prophet*. Some of the psalms seem to have been penned long after; as Ps. cxxxvii. at the time of the captivity in Babylon; but the far greater part of them were certainly penned by David himself, whose genius lay toward poetry and music, and who was raised up, qualified, and animated, for the establishing of the ordinance of singing psalms in the church of GOD, as Moses and Aaron were, in their day, for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice; theirs is superseded, but his remains, and will to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of CHRIST, who descended from him, not from Moses, because he came to take away sacrifice, (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct,) but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David in CHRIST there shall be no end.
- III. The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, 1. To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to GOD as our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor. The book of Job helps to prove our first principles of the divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire toward him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of scripture show that GOD is infinitely above man, and his sovereign LORD; but this shows us that he may, notwithstanding, be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth; and there are ways in which, if it be not our own fault, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life. 2. To

advance the excellencies of revealed religion, and, in the most pleasing powerful manner, to commend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing, in all the book of *Psalms*, of the ceremonial law. Though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which GOD did not desire, (Ps. xl. 6.—li. 16.) as things comparatively little, and which, in time, were to vanish away. But the word and law of GOD, those parts of it which are moral, and of perpetual obligation, are here, all along, magnified and made honourable, no where more. And CHRIST, the Crown and Centre of revealed religion, the Foundation, Corner, and Top-stone, of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy; both his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom that he should set up in the world, which GOD's covenant with David, concerning his kingdom, was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value does this book put upon the word of GOD, his statutes and judgments, his covenant, and the great and precious promises of it; and how does it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever!

IV. The use of it. All scripture, being given by inspiration of GOD, is profitable to convey divine light into our understandings; but this book is of singular use with that to convey divine life and power, and a holy warmth, into our affections. There is no one book of scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church, ever since it was written, and the several parts of it delivered to the chief musician, for the service of the church. 1. It is of use to be sung. Further than David's psalms we *may* go, but we *need* not, for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were, even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least, so as that they may be sung for the edification of the church. And methinks it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to GOD, that were offered him in the days of David and the other godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made, are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare. 2. It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of CHRIST, as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord JESUS expounded the psalms to his disciples, the gospel psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, Luke xxiv. 44. 3. It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people. It is a full fountain, out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution, and encouragement. In telling us, as he often does, what passed between God and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from GOD, and what he will expect, and require, and graciously accept, from us. David was a man after GOD's own heart, and therefore those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart, have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of GOD, after the image of GOD, and may have much comfort in the testimony of their consciences for them, that they can heartily say *Amen* to David's prayers and praises. 4. Even the Psalmist's expressions too are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to GOD, as well as in our first returns to GOD, we are directed to *take with us words*, (Hos. xiv. 2.) these words, words which the Holy Ghost teaches. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may from thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words wherewith to clothe it; sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good to collect the most proper and lively expressions of devotion, which we find here, and to methodize them, and reduce them to the several heads of prayer, that they may be the more ready to us. Or, we may take sometimes one choice psalm, and sometimes another, and pray it over, that is, enlarge upon each verse in our own thoughts, and offer up our meditations to God, as they arise from the expressions we find there. The learned Dr. Hammond, in his preface to the paraphrase on the Psalms, (sect. 29.) says, "That going over a few psalms with these interjections of mental devotion, suggested, animated, and maintained, by the native life and vigour which is in the psalms, is much to be preferred before the saying over of the whole Psalter; since nothing is more fit to be averted in religious offices, than their degenerating into heartless, dispirited, recitations." If, as St. Austin advises, we form our spirit by the affection of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with GOD, in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion, and the affections of our mind, that the book of Psalms assists, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify GOD, but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teaches us how to *order our conversation aright, so as that*, in the end, *we may see the salvation of GOD*, Ps. l. 23. The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament Church, but to us Christians they may be of more use than they could be to them who lived before the coming of CHRIST; for, as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs, are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of CHRIST, which lets us within the veil; so that, if to David's prayers and praises we add St. Paul's prayers in his Epistles, and the new songs in the Revelation, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work; for the scripture, perfected, makes the man of GOD perfect.

As to the division of this book, we need not be solicitous; there is no connexion (or very seldom) between one psalm and another, nor any reason discernible for the placing of them in the order wherein we here find them; but it seems to be ancient, for that which is now the second psalm, was so in the Apostles' time, Acts xiii. 33. The vulgar Latin joins the ix. and x. together; all popish authors quote by that, so that thenceforward, throughout the book, their number is one short of ours; our xi. is their x.; our cxix. their cxviii. But then they divide the cxlvii. into two, and so make up the number of cl. Some have endeavoured to reduce the psalms to proper heads, according to the matter of them, but there is often such a variety of matter in one and the same psalm, that it cannot be done with any certainty; but the seven penitential psalms have been in a particular manner singled out by the devotions of many. They are reckoned to be the vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, and cxliii. The psalms were divided into five books, each concluding with *Amen*, *Amen*, or *Hallelujah*; the first ending with Ps. xli, the second with Ps. lxxii, the third with Ps. lxxxix, the fourth with Ps. cvi, the fifth with Ps. cl. Others divide them into three fifties; others into sixty parts, two for every day of the month, one for the morning, the other for the evening. Let good Christians divide them for themselves, so as may best increase their acquaintance with them, that they may have them at hand upon all occasions, and may sing them in the spirit and with the understanding.

PSALM I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness, and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people, those that serve God and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man, if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face, and then read his own doom. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one, as it is ancient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men into high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; for by this, men's everlasting state will be determined, and the distinction will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shows us, I. The holiness and happiness of a godly man, v. 1. 3. II. The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, v. 4, 5. III. The ground and reason of both, v. 6. Whoever collected the psalms of David, (probably it was Ezra,) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary, to the acceptance of our devotions, that we be righteous before God, (for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight,) and, therefore, that we be right in our notions of blessedness, and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers, who do not walk in good ways.

1. **B**LESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: 2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that, to whom it belongs. Here is,

I. A description given of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows them that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law, which we are bound in duty to obey, and the condition of the promise, which we are bound in interest to fulfil. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by, and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world, or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader, is original and fatal; but if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the conduct of evil-doers, and will not be led by them; (v. 1.) *He walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c.* This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God, must say to evil-doers, *Depart from us*; (cxix. 115.) and departing from evil, is that in which wisdom begins. (1.) He sees evil-doers round about him, the world is full of them, they walk on every side; they are here described by three characters, *ungodly, sinners, and scornful*. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety: *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*—None reach the height of vice at once. They are un-

godly first, casting off the fear of God, and living in the neglect of their duty to him: but they rest not there; when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be *sinners*, they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan; omissions make way for commissions; and by these the heart is so hardened, that, at length, they come to be *scorners*, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others, and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate *ungodly*, signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end, and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every temptation. The word for *sinners*, signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin, and set it up as their trade. The *scornful*, are those that set *their mouths against the heavens*. These the good man sees with a sad heart, they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them, wherever he sees them. He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them. [1.] He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; he is not present at their councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel; he does not consent to them, nor say as they say; (Luke xxiii. 51.) he does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully, that we have reason to think ourselves happy, if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. [2.] He stands not in the way of sinners; he avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way, he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner does, who sets himself in a way that is not good, xxxvi. 4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are: that he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them, (Prov. vii. 8.) but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, Prov. iv. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. [3.] He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness, and please themselves with the searedness of their own consciences; he does not associate with those that sit in close cabal, to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the Devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards, is the seat of the scornful, lxix. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Hos. vii. 5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the direction of the word of God, and makes that familiar to him, v. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations; *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver*, xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God, and with God himself in and by his word; *When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee*, Prov. vi. 22. We may judge of our spiritual state by asking, "What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us?" See here, (1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God; his delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it

is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in, *after the inner man*, Rom. vii. 16, 22. All who are well pleased that there is a God, must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God; *in that law doth he meditate day and night*; by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love, we love to think of, cxix. 97. To meditate on God's word, is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the favour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do, *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God, as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word, morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night; but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; *When I awake, I am still with thee*.

II. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such.

1. In general, he is *blessed*, v. 1. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessings are to him; blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness, than to know where-in blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness, (Rev. xxii. 14.) but happiness itself; supposing there was not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man, that keeps in the way of his duty.

2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude; (v. 3.) *He shall be like a tree*, fruitful and flourishing. This is the effect, (1.) Of his pious practice: he meditates in the law of God, turns that in *succum et sanguinem—into juice and blood*, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God, the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or, (2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore *he shall be like a tree*. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, [1.] That he is planted by the grace of God; these trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself, it is the *planting of the Lord*, and therefore he must in it be glorified; (Isa. lxi. 3.) *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*. [2.] That he is placed by the means of grace; here called the *rivers of water*, those rivers which *make glad the city of our God*; (xlv. 4.) from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret, undiscerned ways. [3.] That his practices shall be fruit, abounding to a good account, Phil. iv. 17. To those whom God first blessed, he said, *Be fruitful*; (Gen. i. 22.) and still, the comfort and honour of fruitfulness are a recompense for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace, that, both in the temper of their minds, and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth

fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great Dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit, (that which is required of them,) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful; improving every opportunity of doing good, and doing it in its proper time. [4.] That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay; *His leaf shall not wither*. Even the *leaf* of those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels, thus won, shall never wither. [5.] That prosperity shall attend him, wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. Whatever he does, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed, to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, and transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to watch against sin and all approaches toward it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness: and, in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work, and to furnish us for every good word and work.

4. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is,

1. The description of the ungodly given, v. 4. (1.) In general; they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition; *they are not so*. The LXX emphatically repeat this, *not so* the ungodly, they are *not so*; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit, but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground. (2.) In particular; whereas the righteous are like useful, fruitful, trees, *they are like the chaff which the wind drives away*, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain, they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered, or looked after more. The chaff may be for a while, among the wheat; but He is coming, *whose fan is in his hand*, and who will *thoroughly purge his floor*. They that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff, will be found so, before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath, (xxxv. 5.) so unable to stand before it, or to escape it, Isa. xvii. 13.

2. The doom of the ungodly read, v. 5. (1.) They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted; *they shall not stand in the judgment*; they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame

and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in their own colours, and every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body; they may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them; *they shall not stand in the judgment*; so plain will the evidence be against them, and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. (2.) They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed; they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous; in the judgment, so some, in that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, Jude 14. 1 Cor. vi. 2. Or, in heaven; there will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2 Thess. ii. 1. The wicked shall not have a place in the congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean or unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, Luke xiii. 27. The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly, therefore, will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites, in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous, and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat; see Matth. xiii. 41, 49. That great day, so the Chaldee here calls it, will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, Mal. iii. 18.

3. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, v. 6. (1.) God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed, because *the Lord knows their way*; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. (2.) Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk, leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends toward ruin, and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or, we may take it thus, The Lord approves of, and is well pleased with, the way of the righteous, and therefore, under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper, and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, according as we are, or are not, accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, (Jer. xii. 3.) knows their secret devotions, (Matth. vi. 6.) knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sin-

ners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and with a holy care, to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favour with our whole hearts.

PSALM II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and showed us our duty, so this is evangelical, and shows us our Saviour. Under the type of David's kingdom, which was of divine appointment, met with much opposition, but prevailed at last, the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is prophesied of, which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm; and I think there is less in it of the type, and more of the anti-type, than in any of the gospel-psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David; (v. 6, 7.) *Thou art my Son*, (v. 8.) *I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth*, and, (v. 12.) *Kiss the Son*. It is interpreted of Christ, Acts iv. 27.—xiii. 33. Heb. i. 5. The Holy Ghost here foretells, I. The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, v. 1. 3. II. The baffling and chastising of that opposition, v. 4. 5. III. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ, notwithstanding that opposition, v. 6. IV. The confirmation and establishment of it, v. 7. V. A promise of the enlargement and success of it, v. 8, 9. VI. A call and exhortation to kings and princes, to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, v. 10. 12. Or thus; We have here, 1. Threatenings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, v. 1. 6. 2. Promises made to Christ himself the Head of this kingdom, v. 7. 9. 3. Counsel given to all, to espouse the interests of this kingdom, v. 10. 12. This psalm, as the former, is very fully prefixed to this book of devotions, because, as it is necessary to our acceptance with God, that we should be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise, that we should be subject to the grace of his gospel, and come to him in the name of a Mediator.

1. **W**HY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed, saying, 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had an usurped kingdom, and exercised dominion to that degree, that he has been called *The prince of the power of the very air* we breathe in, and *The god of the world* we live in. He knows very well that, as the Messiah's kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

I. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, v. 1. 3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world, should have been universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf should immediately have bowed to that of the Messiah, and all the crowns and sceptres on earth should have been laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though

ever so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ. A sign that it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ, and the Devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the *heathen*, the *people*, numbers of them, communities of them; though usually fond of liberty, yet they were averse to the liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty, (among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration,) appear violent against Christ; though his kingdom is not of this world, nor intended to weaken their interests, but very likely, if they pleased, to strengthen them, yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms immediately. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is. See how formidable the enemies of the church are, they are numerous, they are potent. The unbelieving Jews* are here called *heathen*, so wretchedly were they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his courtiers, the disaffected party and their ringleaders, opposed David's coming to the crown; so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, Acts iv. 27.

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against; it is *against the Lord*, and *against his Anointed*, against all religion in general, and the christian religion in particular. It is certain that all who are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself; they *have hated both me and my Father*, John xv. 24. The great Author of our holy religion is here called *the Lord's Anointed*, or *Messiah*, or *Christ*, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king: he is both authorized and qualified to be the church's Head and King, is duly invested in the office, and every way fitted for it; yet there are those that are against him; nay, *therefore* they are against him, because they are impatient of God's authority, envious at Christ's advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give, is here described; (1.) It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They *rage* and *fret*, they gnash their teeth, for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it creates them the utmost uneasiness, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves: see Luke xiii. 14. John xi. 47. Acts v. 17, 33.—xix. 28. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory and the shaking of their usurped dominion. They that did evil, raged at the light. (2.) It is a deliberate and politic opposition. They *imagine*, or meditate; they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their contrivances; they promise themselves that they shall run down religion, and carry the day. (3.) It is a resolute and obstinate opposition. They *set themselves*, set their faces as a flint, and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel-builders, and will persist in their resolution come what will. (4.) It

is a combined and confederate opposition. They *take counsel together*, to assist and animate one another in this opposition; they carry their resolutions, *namine contradicente—unanimously*, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour: and, thereupon, councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work, to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, lxxxiii. 5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at, and what they aim at in this opposition; (v. 3.) *Let us break their bands asunder*. They will not be under any government; they are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke, at least, the yoke of the Lord and his Anointed. They will be content to entertain such notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah, as will serve them to dispute of, and to support their own dominion: if the Lord and his Anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome, but if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then *they will not have this man to reign over them*, Luke xix. 14. Christ has *bands and cords* for us; they that will be saved by him, must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest: and yet against those the quarrel is. Why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of its restraints and obligations? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under, and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin, and to tie themselves up to all duty; they will not receive, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, v. 1. Why do they do this? (1.) They can show no good cause for opposing so just, holy, and gracious, a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or princes; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. (2.) They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst, Christ will have a church in the world, and that church shall be glorious and triumphant; it is *built upon a rock*, and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

II. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror. They that make this mighty struggle, are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who, being of the earth, are earthy; but He whom they contest with, is one that *sits in the heavens*, v. 4. He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect, that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such is his power, that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts: he sits there, as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces and attempts. There he sits as Judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition, xxix. 10. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment; and therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed; God *laughs* at them as a company of

* By the *heathen*, it is more probable, we are to understand the *Gentiles*, exclusively.—Eb.

fools. He has them, and all their attempts, in derision, and therefore *the virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised them*, Isa. xxxvii. 22. Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to *awake*, and *arise*, and *stir up himself*, for the vanquishing of his enemies; here he is said to *sit still*, and do it; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are *justly punished*, v. 5. Though God despises them as impotent, yet he does not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so, and to tremble before him. (1.) Their sin is a provocation to him; he is wroth, he is sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well pleased in us, but in and through the Anointed; and therefore, if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy, and forfeit the benefit of his interposition between us and God. (2.) His anger will be a vexation to them; if he but speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter and consumption, Isa. xi. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 8. He speaks, and it is done; he speaks in wrath, and sinners are undone: as a word made us, so a word can unmake us again; *Who knows the power of his anger?* The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexes them, puts them into a consternation, (as the word is,) and brings them to their wit's end: his setting up this kingdom of his Son, in spite of them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexations to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming, when vexation shall be recompensed to them,

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their counsels turned headlong; (v. 6.) *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*. David was advanced to the throne, and became master of the strong hold of Zion, notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malecontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame, their maimed soldiers, 2 Sam. v. 6. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is Head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement. (1.) Jesus Christ is a King, and is invested by him who is the Fountain of power, with the dignity and authority of a sovereign Prince, in the kingdom both of providence and grace. (2.) God is pleased to call him *his King*, because he is appointed by him, and intrusted for him with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his King, for he is dear to the Father, and one in whom he is well-pleased. (3.) Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it, and he that called him, owns him; *I have set him*; his commandment, his commission, he received from the Father. (4.) Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it; high places (we say) are slippery places, but Christ, being raised, is fixed; *"I have set him, I have settled him."* (5.) He is set upon *Zion*, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel-church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called *holy*. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers, and in the societies they form. The evangelical law of Christ is said to *go forth from Zion*, (Isa. ii. 3. Mic. v. 2.) and therefore that is spoken of as the headquarters of this General, the royal seat of this

Prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with a holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, (not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his footstool,) and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great Trustee of power; and we are to pray, in firm belief of the assurance here given: *"Father in heaven, Thy kingdom come; let thy Son's kingdom come."*

7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gainsaid by him that sits in heaven; let us now hear what the Messiah himself has to say for his kingdom, to make good his claims; it is what all the powers on earth cannot gainsay.

I. The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree, of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the divine wisdom, and the determinations of the divine will, before all worlds, neither of which can be altered. The *precept* or *statute*, so some read it; the *covenant* or *compact*, so others; the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, lxxxix. 3. This our Lord Jesus often referred himself to, as that which, all along in his undertaking, he governed himself by; *This is the will of him that sent me*, John vi. 40. *This commandment have I received of my Father*, John x. 18.—xiv. 31.

II. There is a declaration of that decree, as far as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subjects to this King, and to leave them inexcusable, who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret, it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared by a faithful Witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the Prophet of the church, to declare him, John i. 18. The Fountain of all being is, without doubt, the Fountain of all power; and it is by, from, and under, him, that the Messiah claims a right to rule, from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made, and are governed. Christ here makes out a twofold title to his kingdom.

1. A title by inheritance; (v. 7.) *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. This scripture the apostle quotes, (Heb. i. 5.) to prove, not only that Christ has a more excellent name than the angels, but that he *obtained it by inheritance*, v. 4. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, John i. 14. And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world, as the reason why he is constituted King upon the holy hill of Zion; he is therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly qualified for, that great trust. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour,

and too hard an undertaking, for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but him who is *one with the Father*, and was from eternity by him, as *one brought up with him*, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, Prov. viii. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a King; for because *the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand*, John iii. 35.—v. 20. Being a Son, he is Heir of all things, and the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer thence, that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, “*Thou art my Son*,” it becomes each of us to say to him, “*Thou art my Lord, my Sovereign*.” Further, to satisfy us that his kingdom is well-grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on; *This day have I begotten thee*; which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted, (Heb. i. 5.) to prove that he is the *Brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express Image of his person*, (v. 3.) and to the evidence and demonstration given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle; (Acts xiii. 33.) *He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was *declared to be the Son of God with power*, Rom. i. 4. Christ is said to be the *first-begotten and first-born from the dead*, Rev. i. 5. Col. i. 18. Immediately after his resurrection, he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom; it was then that he said, *All power is given unto me*, and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, *Thy kingdom come*.

2. A title by agreement, v. 8, 9. The agreement is, in short, this; The Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and, upon that condition, he shall have the honour and power of a universal Monarch; see Isa. liii. 12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors: he shall be a Priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both*, Zech. vi. 13.

(1.) The Son must ask. This supposes his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposes the making of a satisfaction, by the virtue of which, the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price, on which this large demand was to be grounded; see John xvii. 4, 5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims, not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

(2.) The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him, [1.] That his government shall be universal; he shall have the heathen for his inheritance; not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also; those in the uttermost parts of the earth, (as this nation of ours,) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus; they are to him for a name and a praise, God the Father gives them to him, when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is, in part, fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel, when it was first

preached, and Christ’s throne was set up there where Satan’s seat had long been. But it is to be yet further accomplished, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, Rev. xi. 15. *Who shall live when God doeth this!* [2.] That it shall be victorious; *Thou shalt break them*, those of them that oppose thy kingdom, *with a rod of iron*, v. 9. This was, in part, fulfilled, when the nation of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ’s gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented, (Dan. ii. 40.) by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the Christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled, till all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be finally put down, 1 Cor. xv. 24. See ex. 5, 6. Observe, How powerful Christ is, and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him; he has a rod of iron wherewith to crush them that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter’s vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably, dashed in pieces by him; see Rev. ii. 27. “*Thou shalt do it; thou shalt have leave to do it*.” Nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel-church shall not be built and established; *I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee*, Isa. xliii. 4. “*Thou shalt have power to do it; none shall be able to stand before thee, thou shalt do it effectually*.” They that will not bow, shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God, and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God, that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established, and shall triumph over all opposition.

10. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. They hear that it is in vain to oppose Christ’s government; let them therefore be so wise for themselves, as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them, shows that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, v. 10. Those that would be wise, must be instructed; and those are truly wise, that receive instruction from the word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. They that give law and judgment to others, must receive it from Christ; and it will be their wisdom. What is said to them, is said to all, and is required of every one of us; only it is directed to kings and judges, because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power, that opposed the setting up of Christ’s kingdom, v. 2. We are exhorted,

I. To reverence God, and to stand in awe of him, v. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great, and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our Friend and Benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent

with each other, for, 1. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God; there is the same infinite distance between them and God, that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. 2. We must rejoice in God; in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us; our salvation must be wrought out *with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but rejoice with trembling, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are a savour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy, and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in, and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. *To rejoice with trembling, is to rejoice as though we rejoice not*, 1 Cor. vii. 30.

II. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, v. 12. This is the great duty of the christian religion; it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given for this purpose; *Kiss the Son*. Christ is called the *Son*, because so he was declared, (v. 7.) *Thou art my Son*. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and, upon that account, he is to be adored by us. He is the *Son of man*, the Mediator, (John v. 27.) and, upon that account, to be received and submitted to; he is called the *Son*, to include both, as God is often called emphatically the *Father*, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, *Kiss the Son*: not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites, who pretend to honour him, but really affront him; but with a believing kiss. (1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation; Kiss, and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God terminate, let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our Peace. (2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship; they that worshipped idols, kissed them, 1 Kings xix. 18. Hos. xiii. 2. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, xlv. 11. We must worship the *Lamb*, as well as him that sits on the throne, Rev. v. 9-13. (3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love; *Kiss the Son*; enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did, to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet," Luke vii. 38. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1 Sam. x. 1. "Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest."

2. The reasons to enforce this command; they are taken from our own interest, which God, in his gospel, shows a concern for. Consider,

(1.) The certain ruin we run upon, if we refuse and reject Christ; *Kiss the Son*; for it is at your peril if you do not." [1.] "It will be a great provocation to him; do it, lest he be angry." The

Father is angry already, the Son is the Mediator that undertakes to make peace; if we slight him, the *Father's wrath abides upon us*, (John iii. 36.) and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted, and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a Lamb; he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this King, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains, Rev. vi. 16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name, by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. [2.] It will be utter destruction to yourselves; *lest ye perish from the way, or in the way*, so some, "In the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes; *lest your way perish*," (as i. 6.) "lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest ye be cut off from him as your way to God." It intimates that they were, or, at least, thought themselves, in the way; but, by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven; are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never arrive there.

(2.) The happiness we are sure of, if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled, though *but a little*, the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable, if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell: one would think it should therefore follow, "When his wrath is kindled, woe be to those that despise him;" but the Psalmist startles at the thought, and blesses those that escape such a doom. They that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so, when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their Refuge and Patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers, will be forced to say to their own greater confusion, "Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him."

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts not only filled with a holy awe of God, but borne up with a cheerful confidence in Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; *We are the circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus*.

PSALM III.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, showed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer; so this, by the example of David in distress, shows us the peace and holy security of the redeemed: how safe they really are, and think themselves to be, under the divine protection. David, being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, I. Complains to God of his enemies, v. 1, 2. II. Confides in God, and encourages himself in him as his God, notwithstanding, v. 3. III. Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, v. 4, 5. IV. Triumphs over his fears, (v. 6.) and over his enemies, whom he prays against, v. 7. V. Gives God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort, of the divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, v. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God, who speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

I. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise

up against me 2. Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God.* Selah. 3. But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head.

The title of this psalm and many others, is as a key hung ready at the door, to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned, we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or, at least, the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thoughts, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away, not his crown only, but his life; we have the story, 2 Sam. xv. &c. 1. David was now in great grief; when, in his flight, he went up the mount of olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot; yet *then* he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? David was; and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs. 2. He was now in great danger, the plot against him was laid deep, the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet *then* he kept hold of his interest in God, and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us *to* God, not drive us *from* him. 3. He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things; from his son, whom he had been indulgent of; from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; this he could not but resent, and it was enough to break in upon any man's temper; yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation, that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion, which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. The sedateness of his mind was evinced by the Spirit's coming upon him; for the Spirit chooses to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disfit us for communion with God. 4. He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which, for that sin, God threatened to *raise up against him out of his own house*; (2 Sam. xii. 11.) which, no doubt, he observed, and took occasion thence to renew his repentance for it. Yet he did not *therefore* cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God, or our hope in God. 5. He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one struggle for it; and yet, by this psalm, it appears that he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses, he applies himself to God. Whither else should we go but to him, when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find a way open heaven-ward. Wherever we are, we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him, whithersoever we are driven. David, in his flight, attends his God,

I. With a representation of his distress, v. 1, 2. He looks round, and takes, as it were, a view of his

enemies' camp, or receives information of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his own council-board. Two things he complains of, concerning his enemies.

1. That they were very many; *Lord, how are they increased!* Beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed; and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally rebel against him, and choose for their head such a foolish and giddy young man as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects, as much as ever any king had, and yet now, of a sudden, he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes, (cxlvi. 3.) so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, *Crucify him, Crucify him.* How were they then increased, that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange, if the stream be against them, and the powers that threaten them, grow more and more formidable.

2. That they were very malicious; they rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all, they said of his soul, *There is no help for him in God.* That is, (1.) they put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his; concluding that, because his servants and subjects forsook him thus, and did not help him, God had deserted him, and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked *on*, or rather to be looked *off*, as a hypocrite, and a wicked man. (2.) They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him; "His danger is so great, that God himself cannot help him." It is strange, that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with. (3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God, and drive him to despair of relief from him. "They have said it *to* my soul;" so it may be read; compare xi. 1.—xlii. 10. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him, as to think it possible to take him off from that foundation. The mere temptation was a buffeting to him, *a thorn in his flesh*, nay, *a sword in his bones*. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with any thing so much, as if you offer to persuade him, *There is no help for him in God.* David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord. "They say, *There is no help for me in thee*; but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, *There is no salvation*" (for so the word is) "*for him in God*; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation*, (xxxv. 3.) and that shall satisfy me, and, in due time, silence them." To this complaint he adds *Selah*, which occurs about 70 times in the book of psalms. Some refer it to the music with which, in David's time, the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. *Selah, Mark that*, or, "*Stop there, and consider a little.*" As here, they say, *There is no help for him in God, Selah.* "Take time for such a thought as this, *Get thee behind me, Satan; The Lord rebuke thee!* Away with such a vile suggestion!"

II. With a profession of his dependence upon God, v. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Pro-

vidence, or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him, and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, cries out with so much the more assurance, "*But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me*; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will never distrust thee." See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. 1. Safety. "*Thou art a Shield for me, a Shield about me*," so some, "to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me." Not only *my Shield*, (Gen. xv. 1.) which denotes an interest in the divine protection; but a *shield for me*, which denotes the present benefit and advantage of that protection. 2. Honour; *Thou art my Glory*. Those whom God owns for his, are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace, the crown was fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself, while he has God for his Glory, Isa. lx. 19. "*Thou art my Glory; thy glory I reckon mine*;" (so some); "this is what I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour—that I may be to my God for a name and a praise." 3. Joy and deliverance; "*Thou art the lifter up of my head*; thou wilt lift up my head *out of* my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again, in due time; however, thou wilt lift up my head *under* my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail." If, in the worst of times, God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the Lifter up of their head, that gives them both *cause* to rejoice, and *hearts* to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, who seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from God, and we should concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken against, every where fought against; but, in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God who owns and protects, and will, in due time, crown his own interest both in the world, and in the hearts of his people.

4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. 5. I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the LORD sustained me. 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about. 7. Arise, O LORD: save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8. Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

David, having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort, in looking upward, when, if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had derived from trusting in God, and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue to which the dark dispensation he was now under would shortly be brought.

1. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and, through God's goodness, got through, or, in this, hitherto. David had been exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient.

He now remembered, with pleasure,

1. That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too; (this will be a comfortable reflection, when we are in trouble;) *I cried unto God with my voice*. Care and grief do us good and no hurt, when they set us a praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And though God understands the language of the heart, when the *voice is not heard*, (1 Sam. i. 13.) and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who *cause their voice to be heard on high*, (Isa. lviii. 4.) *vix et præterea nihil*—mere sound, yet when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, it shall be taken notice of, in the account, that we cried unto God with our *voice*.

2. That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers; *He heard me out of his holy hill*, from heaven, the high and holy place; from the ark on mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to *carry back the ark into the city*, when he was flying from Absalom, (2 Sam. xv. 25.) knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill; nothing can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us, and the operations of his grace in us; between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant; Christ was set *King upon the holy hill of Zion*; (ii. 6.) and it is through him whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

3. That he had always been very safe, and very easy, under the divine protection; (v. 5.) "*I laid me down and slept*, composed and quiet; and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me;"

(1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning. Many have not where to lay their head, (but wander in deserts,) or, if they have, dare not lie down, for fear of the enemy; but we have laid us down in peace. Many lie down, and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawns of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down, and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation. Many lie down, and sleep, and never wake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians; but we lie down, and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it, but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food? We have been safe under his protection, and easy in the arms of his good providence. (2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never de-

prived him of an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose; for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him, and made him easy. It is a great mercy, when we are in trouble, to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. (3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ; in his sufferings, he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore, though he laid him down, and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him, that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had often broken the power, and restrained the malice, of his enemies; had *smitten them upon the cheek-bone*, (v. 7.) had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully; had disabled them to do the mischief they intended; for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, who were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people, shall be broken. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths, and tie their hands.

II. See with what confidence he looks forward to the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it,

1. His *fears were all stilled and silenced*, v. 6. With what a holy bravery does he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies! "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*, that either in a foreign invasion, or an intestine rebellion, set themselves, encamp, against me round about." No man seemed less safe; (his enemies are numerous, *ten thousands*; they are spiteful and resolute "They have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seem to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one;") and yet no man was more secure; "*I will not be afraid, for all this; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last.*" When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spake doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded, like an humble penitent, *Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth him good*, 2 Sam. xv. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

2. His *prayers were quickened and encouraged*, v. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he *therefore* prays, *Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God*. Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be inquired of.

3. His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees *more with him than against him*, v. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon, and fetches comfort from. (1.) That *salvation belongeth unto the Lord*; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail; it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the

Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God, is the God of salvation. (2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions toward them. He has, in his word, pronounced a blessing upon his people; and we are bound to believe that that blessing does accordingly rest upon them, though there are not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God, and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves, and one another, to continue still hoping, and quietly waiting for, the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM IV.

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional; the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which Wisdom cries to men, to the *sons of men*, (as *Prov. viii. 4, 5.*) to receive instruction. The title does not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional, though some were; but that many of them were designed, in general, for the instruction of the people of God, who attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations: such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 Pet. i. 20. Here, I. David begins with a short prayer; (v. 1.) and that prayer preaches. II. He directs his speech to the children of men, and, 1. In God's name, reproves them for the dishonour they do to God, and the damage they do to their own souls, v. 2. 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people, for their encouragement to be religious, v. 3. 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, v. 4. III. He exhorts them to serve God, and trust to him, v. 5. IV. He gives an account of his own experiences of the grace of God working in him, 1. Enabling him to choose God's favour for his felicity, v. 6. 2. Filling his heart with joy therein, v. 7. 3. Quieting his spirit in the assurance of the divine protection he was under, night and day, v. 8.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. 2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah. 3. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. 4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.

The title of the psalm acquaints us, that David, having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who (according to the divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular

account of the constitution, the modelling of the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 Chron. xxv. Some *prophesied according to the order of the king*, v. 2. Others *prophesied with the harp, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord*, v. 3. Of others, it is said, that they were to *lift up the horn*, v. 5. But of them all, that they were *for song in the house of the Lord*, (v. 6.) and were *instructed in the songs of the Lord*, v. 7. This psalm was committed to one of the chiefs, to be sung on *Neginoth—Stringed instruments*, (Hab. iii. 19.) which were played on with the hand; with music of that kind the choristers were to sing this psalm: and it should seem that then *they only* sung, not the people; but the New Testament appoints all Christians to sing, (Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.) from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully; and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then; the melody is to be made in the heart.

In these verses,

I. David addresses himself to God, v. 1. Whether the *sons of men*, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience, and an answer of peace; "*Hear me when I call, and accept my adorations, grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals; have mercy upon me, and hear me.*" All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed, not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. "Hear me for thy mercy-sake," is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further, 1. "*Thou art the God of my righteousness*"; not only a righteous God thyself, but the *Author of my righteous dispositions*, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righteous man; therefore *hear me*, and so attest thine own work in me; thou art also the *Patron of my righteous cause*, the Protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to *bring forth my righteousness as the light.*" When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, *It is God that justifies*; he is the God of a believer's righteousness. 2. "*Thou hast formerly enlarged me when I was in distress*, enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses; therefore *now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me.*" The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress, is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer; "*Thou hast; wilt thou not?* For thou art God, and changest not; thy work is perfect."

II. He addresses himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the Son of David, to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety; (v. 2.) "*O ye sons of men,*" (of great men, so some; men of high degree, understanding it of the partisans of Saul or Absalom,) "how long will you oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me?" Or, it may be taken more generally; God, by the psalmist, here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. "You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do;" (1.) "You debase yourselves, for you are *sons of men*;" (the word signifies man as a noble creature;)" consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of

those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally, and unbecoming yourselves." Let the *sons of men* consider and show themselves men. (2.) "You dishonour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame." They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if David's words, glory may be understood of God, whom he called his *Glory*, iii. 3. Idolaters are charged with *changing the glory of God* into shame, Rom. i. 23. All wilful sinners do so by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving that affection and service to the creature, which are due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to *turn his glory into shame*. (3.) "You put a cheat upon yourselves, you *love vanity*, and *seek after leasing, or lying*, or that which is a *lie*. You are yourselves vain and lying, and you love to be so." Or, "You set your hearts upon that which will prove, at last, but vanity and a lie;" they that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; as they also do that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world; for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. "How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? *When shall it once be?*" Jer. xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him, and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shows them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, v. 3. This comes in here, (1.) As a reason why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, or think to run him down. It is at their peril, if they *offend one of these little ones*, whom God has *set apart for himself*, Matth. xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye; and he will make their persecutors to know it sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry, and plead their cause, Exod. xxii. 23. It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the *godly man*, whom *the Lord has set apart* for that honour, and who does not usurp it, or assume it to himself; "The opposition, therefore, you give to him and to his advancement, is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual." God has, in like manner, set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that Merciful One; and those that attempt to hinder his advancement will certainly be baffled, for the Father hears him always. Or, (2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly; "You have hitherto sought vanity; be truly religious, and you will be truly happy, here and for ever; for," [1.] "God will *secure to himself* his interest in you." *The Lord has set apart him that is godly*, every particular godly man, for himself, in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence, and operations of his grace; they are *purified unto him a peculiar people*. Godly men are God's separated, sealed, ones; he knows them that are his, has set his image and superscription upon them; he distinguishes them with uncommon favours; *They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this*; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they

are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. [2.] "God will secure to you an interest in himself;" this David speaks with application; *The Lord will hear when I call unto him.* We should think ourselves happy, if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while, upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten and to reason themselves out of it; (v. 4.) "*Stand in awe and sin not;*" (*Be angry and sin not*, so the LXX, and some think the apostle takes that exhortation from him, Eph. iv. 26.) "*commune with your own hearts.*" Be converted; and, in order thereunto, consider and fear." Note, (1.) We must not sin, nor miss our way, and so miss our aim. (2.) One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. "Be moved," so some, in opposition to carelessness and carnal security. "Always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him." (3.) One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe, is, to be frequent and serious in *communing with our own hearts*; "*Talk with your hearts*; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with at any time, let it not be unsaid." A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. "*Commune with your hearts*; examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them, and amend what is amiss in them; employ them in solemn pious meditations, let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given, in order to the doing of this work well and to good purpose." [1.] "Choose a solitary time; do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn you, to go to sleep at night," (as some of the heathen moralists have directed,) "examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace." David himself practised what he here counsels others to do; (lxxiii. 6.) *I remember thee on my bed*; upon a sick-bed particularly we should consider our ways, and commune with our own hearts about them. [2.] "Compose yourselves into a serious frame; Be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be silent, and wait for an answer; even in quiet times, keep your spirits calm and quiet."

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty; (v. 5.) *Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness.* We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David and his government, would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright: and those that know the concerns that lie between them and God, will be glad of the Mediator, the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, (1.) That we serve him; "*Offer sacrifices to him*, your own selves first, and your best sacrifices." But they must be *sacrifices of righteousness*, good works; all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. "Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness." The sacrifices of the unrighteous, God will not accept, they are an abomination, Isa. i. 11, &c. (2.) That we confide in him. "First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of right-

eousness, and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any diffidence of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him, by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth, or in an arm of flesh; trust in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; trust in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency."

In singing these verses, we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people; and we must press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; in praying over these verses, we must beg of God grace thus to think, and thus to do.

6. *There be many that say, Who will show us any good?* LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. 8. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

We have here,

I. The foolish wish of worldly people; *There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Who will make us to see good?* What good they meant, is intimated, v. 7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good, and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish, 1. They inquire, in general, "Who will make us happy?" but do not apply themselves to God, who alone can; and so they expose themselves to be ill-advised, and show they would rather be beholden to any than to God, for they would willingly live without him. 2. They inquire for good that may be seen, seeming good, sensible good; and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but, as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look, with an eye of faith, further than we can see with an eye of sense. 3. They inquire for *any* good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; and what are all these worth, without a good God, and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish, of carnal worldlings is their folly, and yet *many there be* that join in it; their doom will be accordingly; "*Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things*, the penny thou didst agree for."

II. The wise choice which godly people make. David, and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* 1. He disagrees from the vote of the many; God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. "They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I; I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it." 2. He and his friends agree in their

choice of God's favour as their felicity, that is it which, in their account, is better than life and all the comforts of life.

(1.) That is it which they most earnestly desire and seek after; this is the breathing of their souls, "*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*; most are for other things, but we are for this." Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; they whom God has set apart, have a prayer by themselves, which, though others may speak the words of it, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say. *Amen* to; "Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more; that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness, and we will be satisfied *with it*." Observe, Though David speaks of himself only, in the 7th and 8th verses, he speaks, in this prayer, for others also, "*upon us*," as Christ taught us to pray, "*Our Father*." All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others as well as for ourselves, for in God's favour there is enough for us all, and we shall have never the less for others sharing in what we have.

(2.) That is it in which, above any thing, they rejoice; (v. 7.) "*Thou hast hereby often put gladness into my heart*; not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable; and therefore that is it which I will still pursue, which I will seek after all the days of my life." When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increase. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial, joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; *even in laughter their heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. "*Thou hast given gladness in my heart*; so the word is. True joy is God's gift, *not as the world giveth*, John xiv. 27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather, for they may know better, and will not.

(3.) That is it which they entirely confide in, and in that confidence they are always easy, v. 8. He had laid him down, and slept, (iii. 5.) so he will still; "*I will lay me down* (having the assurance of thy favour) *in peace*, and with as much pleasure as those whose corn and wine increase, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there when *his heart was merry*; (Ruth iii. 7.) *for thou only makest me to dwell in safety*. Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail." If he have the light of God's countenance, [1.] He can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposes itself in him as its Rest, and so he lays him down, and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have, and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. (2.) He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quiet, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then, with good old Simeon, *depart in peace*, (Luke ii. 29.) being assured that God will receive his soul, to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in

safety in the grave. (3.) He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman, that, *having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how*, Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man, having, by faith and prayer, cast his care upon God, sleeps and rests night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him, and prepared to welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God, and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and, with a holy indifferency about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the conduct and custody of the Divine Providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us, if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

PSALM V.

This psalm is a prayer, a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies; many such times passed over David, nay, there was scarcely any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in *this* he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies; and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God, when he was so beset, pointed at Christ's dependence on his Father, and triumphs over the powers of darkness, in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, I. David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, promising to pray, and promising himself that God would certainly hear him, v. 1. 3. II. He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort, of God's holiness, v. 4. 6. III. He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, v. 7. IV. He prayed, I. For himself, that God would guide him, v. 8. 2. Against his enemies, that God would destroy them, v. 9, 10. 3. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, v. 11, 12. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth. A psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation. 2. Hearer unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up. 4. For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar, but that it is said to be upon *Nehiloth*, a word nowhere else used. It is conjectured, (and it is but a conjecture,) that it signifies *wind* instruments, with which this psalm was sung, as *Neginoth* was supposed to signify the *stringed*-instruments.

In these verses, David had an eye to God,

I. As a prayer-hearing God; such he has always been, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him, *O Lord*; (v. 1, 3.) *Jehovah*, a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, whom we are bound to adore, and, "*my King and my God*, (v. 2.) whom I have avouched for my God, to whom I have sworn alle-

giance, and under whose protection I have put myself as my King." We believe that the God we pray to is a King and a God, King of kings, and God of gods; but that is not enough, the most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is, to look upon him as *our King and our God*, whom we lie under peculiar obligations to, and whom we have peculiar expectations from. Now observe,

1. What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes, in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently, and in faith, we have reason to hope, (1.) That God will take cognizance of our case, the representation we make of it, and the requests we make upon it; for so he prays here; *Give ear to my words, O Lord.* Though God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his people's prayers, and it is not heavy, that he cannot hear. Men, perhaps, will not, or cannot, hear us; our enemies are so haughty, that they will not, our friends at such a distance, that they cannot; but God, though high, though in heaven, can, and will. (2.) That he will take it into his wise and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer; for so he prays, *Consider my meditation.* David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, xix. 14. It is when we thus consider our prayers, and then only, that we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours. (3.) That he will, in due time, return a gracious answer of peace: for so he prays, (v. 2.) *Hearken to the voice of my cry.* His prayer was a *cry*, it was *the voice of his cry*, which denotes fervency of affection, and importunity of expression; such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, and do wonders.

2. What David here promises, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled, and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance; this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright, for we ask, and have not, if we ask amiss.

Four things David here promises, and so must we.

(1.) That he will pray, that he will make conscience of it, and make a business of it; *unto thee will I pray.* "Others live without prayer, but I will pray." Kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. "Others pray to strange gods, and expect relief from them, but to thee, to thee only, will I pray." The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer, should confirm our resolution to live and die praying.

(2.) That he will pray *in the morning*; his praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed, that shall be the date of his letters to heaven; "Morning, and evening, and at noon, will I pray, nay, seven times a day, will I praise thee;" but certainly, morning-prayer is especially our duty; we are the fittest for prayer, when we are in the most fresh, and lively, and composed, frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned, by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace.

(3.) That he will have his eye single, and his heart intent, in the duty; *I will direct my prayer*, as a marksman directs his arrow to the white; with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or, as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place, so must we direct our

prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always send them by the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God; his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end, in all our prayers; let our first petition be, *Hallowed be thy name*; and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it that was given to Christ himself, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.*

(4.) That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace; "I will look up; will look after my prayers, and *hear what God the Lord will speak*, (lxxxv. 8. Hab. ii. 1.) that, if he grant what I asked, I may be thankful, if he deny, I may be patient, if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint." We must look *up*, or look *out*, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers, for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked steadfastly on Peter and John, (Acts iii. 4.) we may expect that God will give ear to our words, and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here, who does not pray, "Lord, do this, or the other, for me;" but, "Hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee."

II. As a sin-hating God, v. 4-6. David takes notice of this, 1. As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet, if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers, lxxvi. 18. 2. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here,

(1.) The holiness of God's nature; when he says, *Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*, he means, "Thou art a God that hates it, as directly contrary to thine infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will." Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none thence infer, that God has pleasure in wickedness, no not in that by which men pretend to honour him, as those do that hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified.* God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. Let those, therefore, who delight in sin, know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say, when he is tempted, *I am tempted of God*, for God is not the Author of sin, neither *shall evil dwell with him*; it shall not always be countenanced, and suffered to prosper. Dr. Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses, which would not permit strangers, who persisted in their idolatry, to dwell in the land of Israel.

(2.) The justice of his government; The foolish *shall not stand in his sight*, shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest of all fools; not fools of God's making, those are to be pitied, he hates nothing that he has made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin. "Those whom thou hatest, thou shalt destroy; particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction. [1.] Those that are fools, that speak leasing or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners, (Rev. xxi. 8.) *All liars*, and (ch. xxii. 15.) *Whosoever loves and makes a lie*; nothing is more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful, to the God of truth. [2.] Those that are cruel;

Thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful, to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleases. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the Devil, and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; the worse they are, the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing, which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7. But as for me, I will come *into thy house* in the multitude of thy mercy; *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. 8. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9. For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue. 10. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. 11. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. 12. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

In these verses, David gives three characters; of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God; and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

I. He gives an account of himself, and prays for himself, v. 7, 8. 1. He is steadfastly resolved to keep close to God and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; "*But as for me, that shall not keep me from thee.*" God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves, (1.) To worship God, to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. (2.) To worship him publicly; "*I will come into thy house, the courts of thy house, to worship there with other thy faithful worshippers.*" David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone, (v. 2, 3.) and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from, public ordinances. (3.) To worship him reverently, and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man; "*In thy fear will I worship,* with a holy awe of God upon my spirit," Heb. xii. 28. God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers. (4.) To take his encouragement, in worship, from God himself only. [1.] From his infinite mercy: it is in the *multitude* of God's mercy, (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from

him,) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be the foundation both of our hopes, and of our joy, in every thing wherein we have to do with him. [2.] From the instituted medium of worship, which was then the temple, here called *the temple of his holiness*, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions, as they then had to the temple. 2. He earnestly prays that God, by his grace, would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty; (v. 8.) *Lead me in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies*, Hebr. "*because of those which observe me, which watch for my halting, and seek occasion against me.*" See here, (1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him; the more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus, by wisdom and grace, good may come out of evil. (2.) The right course which David took for the baffling of those who sought occasion against him: he committed himself to a divine guidance, begged of God, both by his providence and by his grace, to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it, at any time, in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called *God's way and his righteousness*, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him, see 1 Sam. xviii. 14, 15.

II. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, v. 9, 10. 1. If his account of them be true, as, no doubt, it is, they have a very bad character; and if they had not been bad men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken (v. 6.) of God's hating the bloody and deceitful man; "*Now, Lord,*" says he, "*that is the character of my enemies: they are deceitful, there is no trusting them; for there is no faithfulness in their mouth.*" They thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but blemish David, and make him odious; "*Lord, lead me,*" says he, (v. 8.) "*for such as these, are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocence itself is no security.* Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? *They flatter with their tongues;* it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more securely. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither, their inward part is wickedness itself, it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody, for *their throat is an open sepulchre*, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up; insatiable as the grave, which never says, "*It is enough,*" Prov. xxx. 15, 16. This is quoted, (Rom. iii. 13.) to show the general corruption of mankind, for they are all naturally prone to malice, Tit. iii. 3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. 2. If his prayer against them be heard, as, no doubt, it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are, and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them, according to what he had said, (v. 6.) "*Thou shalt destroy men of this character.*" *So let them fall;* and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin, if they were let alone. The psalmist prays that God would cast them out of his protection and

favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living; and woe to those whom God casts out. They have by their sins deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection; "*Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions* by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are become ripe for ruin." Persecuting God's servants, fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. Nay, they may be easily made to *fall by their own counsels*; that which they do, to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the over-ruling providence of God, may be made the means of their destruction, vii. 15.—ix. 15. He pleads, "*They have rebelled against thee*: had they been only mine enemies, I could safely have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent, to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin." His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold, That all who rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If it be a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, as we are told it is, (2 Thess. i. 6.) we pray it may be done, whenever we pray, *Father, thy will be done.*

III. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe,

1. The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous; (v. 12.) for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well-pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God, and dependence on him.

2. His prayer for them; "*Let them rejoice*; let them have cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy and unspeakable; let them shout for joy, with constant joy and perpetual, let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God; *let them be joyful in thee*, in thy favour, in thy salvation; not in any creature. Let them rejoice because thou coverest them, or overshadowest them, dwellest among them." Perhaps it is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them, and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God, and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind, or in our interest. Let all that are entitled to God's promises, have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God.

3. His comfort concerning them, v. 12. *Therefore* he takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for, (1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing; *Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous*; wilt command a blessing upon them. Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so. *Those whom thou blessest, they are blessed indeed.* (2.) "They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him," so some read it; "it is his honour, it will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great: with that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him on every side as with a

shield." A shield, in war, guards only one side but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that, while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's guidance and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace, and with the prospect of God's triumphs, at last, over all his enemies, and his people's triumphs in him and in his salvation.

PSALM VI.

David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations: either it was penned in a time, or, at least, calculated for a time, of great trouble, both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? Is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of this psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with. He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises; like Hannah, who went to prayer with a sorrowful spirit, but, when she had prayed, went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of; I. Sickness of body. II. Trouble of mind, arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. III. The insults of his enemies, upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, v. 1. . 7. 2. He assures himself of an answer of peace, shortly, to his full satisfaction, v. 8. . 10. This psalm is like the book of Job.

*To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith.
A psalm of David.*

1. **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. 3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies' sake. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6. I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears. 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting ready for mercy, who, under God's rebukes, sow in tears, as David does here.

Let us observe here,

I. The representation he makes to God of his grievances; he pours out his complaint before him: whither else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? 1. He complains of bodily pain and sickness; (v. 2.) *My bones are vexed*: his bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Though David was a king, yet he was sick and pained; his imperial crown would not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet that will not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither will his goodness keep him in health; *Lord, behold, he whom*

thou lovest is sick. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged, by their example, to show before God our trouble in that case, who is *for the body*, and takes cognizance of its ailments. 2. He complains of inward trouble; *My soul is also sore vexed*; and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity*, if that be in good plight; but, if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; that was the vexation of his soul, that made him cry, *I am weak, heal me*. It is a sad thing for a man to have his bones and his soul vexed at the same time; but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people: nay, and this completed this complicated trouble, that it was continued upon them a great while, which is here intimated in that expostulation, (v. 3.) *Thou, O Lord, how long?* To the living God we must, at such a time, apply ourselves, who is the only Physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

II. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavy; he groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to swim, and *watered his couch*; (v. 6.) wept till he had almost wept his eyes out; (v. 7.) *Mine eye is consumed because of grief*. David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction; but, when sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawals from him, then he takes on thus, and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuses to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note 1. It has often been the lot of the best men to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so: our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate. 2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender and to relent, under the tokens of God's displeasure. David, who could face Goliath himself, and many another threatening enemy, with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the apprehensions of divine wrath; and it is no diminution at all to his character. 3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might appear unto men to mourn; but David mourns in the night upon the bed where he lay, communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but the eye of Him who is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was; he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that he watered his couch. 5. The triumphs of wicked men, in the sorrows of the saints, add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old, because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and put bad constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow, David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful*, Heb. v. 7.

III. The petitions which he offers up to God, in this sorrowful and distressed state. 1. That which he dreads as the greatest evil, is, the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays, (v. 1.) *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger*, though I have deserved it, *neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*. He does not pray, "Lord, rebuke me not; Lord, chasten me not;" for, as many as God loves, he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son

in whom he delights. He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough, if God, at the same time, lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter though sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, "*Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath*"; let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me." Herein David was a type of Christ, whose sorest complaint, in his sufferings, was, of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies, "Why do they crucify me?" or the unkindness of his friends, "Why do they desert me?" But he cried with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever, and always take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. 2. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is, the favour and grace of God. He prays, (1.) That God would pity him, and look upon him with compassion; he thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. Hence he prays, "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord*"; in wrath, remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice." (2.) That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, *Have mercy upon me*. (3.) That God would put forth his power for his relief: *Lord, heal me*, (v. 2.) *Save me*, (v. 4.) speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well." (4.) That he would be at peace with him; "*Return, O Lord*, receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me. Thou hast seemed to depart from me, and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return, and show thyself nigh to me." (5.) That he would especially preserve the inward man, and the interests of that, whatever becomes of the body; "*O Lord, deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever*." It is an unspeakable privilege, that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

IV. The pleas with which he enforces his petitions; not to move God, (he knows our cause, and the true merits of it, better than we can state it,) but to move himself. 1. He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long; "*I am weak, I am troubled, sore troubled*; O Lord, how long shall I be so?" 2. He pleads God's mercy; thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer; *Save me, for thy mercies' sake*. 3. He pleads God's glory; (v. 5.) "*For in death there is no remembrance of thee*. Lord, if thou deliver me and comfort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt intrust me with, in thy service, and to thy glory; and, all the remainder of my days, I will preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee: but if I die, I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee, and doing good to others; for in the grave, who will give thee thanks?" Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God, and give thanks to him. But, (1.) In the second death, (which, perhaps, David, being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of,) there is no pleasing remembrance of God; devils and damned spirits

blaspheme him, and do not praise him. "Lord, let me not lie always under this wrath, for that is *Shool*, it is *Hell* itself, and lays me under an everlasting disability to praise thee." They that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray, in faith, "Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor any thanks given to thee." (2.) Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men, by opposing the powers of darkness, and bringing many on this earth to know God, and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained, that the joys of the saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so, than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the divine grace, than the services of the saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ. Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may, with good reason, pray, that, if it be the will of God, and he has any further work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us, or them, to serve him. To depart and be with Christ, is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh, is more profitable for the church. This, David had an eye to, when he pleaded this, *In the grave, who shall give thee thanks?* xxx. 9.—lxxxviii. 10.—cxv. 17. Isa. xxxviii. 18. And this, Christ had an eye to, when he said, *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.*

We should sing these verses with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above any thing; and with thankfulness, if this be not our condition, and compassion to those who are thus afflicted: if we be thus troubled, let it comfort us, that our case is not without precedent, nor, if we humble ourselves and pray, as David did, shall it be long without redress.

8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. 10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore-vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning, and weeping, and giving up all for gone, (v. 6, 7.) here looks, and speaks, very pleasantly. Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is very confident the issue will be good, and his sorrow turned into joy.

1. He distinguishes himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults; (v. 8.) *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* When he was in the depth of his distress, (1.) He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that this cloud of melancholy was blown over, he is assured that his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people: he began to suspect himself to be one of them, because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now that all his fears are silenced, he bids them depart, knowing that his lot is among the chosen. (2.) The workers of iniquity had teased him, and taunted him, and asked him, "Where was thy God?" triumphing in his despondency and despair; but now

he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly complete his deliverance. (3.) Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion, and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, "Depart from me, I will never lend an ear to your counsel; you would have had me to curse God and die, but I will bless him and live." This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin, and the reformation of manners, lxxv. 4.—ci. 3. When God has done great things for us, that should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*, (Luke xiii. 27.) and so teaches us to say now, cxix. 115.

2. He assures himself that God was, and would be, propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under. (1.) He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears, (as Isa. lxxv. 24. Dan. ix. 20.) and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, "The Lord hath heard," and again, "The Lord hath heard." By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would, in due time, be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy; *The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping*; silent tears are not speechless ones: his prayers were cries to God; "The Lord has heard the voice of my supplication," has put his *Fiat*—*Let it be done*, to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly." (2.) Thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers; "He has heard the voice of my supplication, and therefore he will receive my prayer; for he gives, and does not upbraid with former grants."

3. He either prays for the conversion, or predicts the destruction, of his enemies and persecutors, v. 10. (1.) It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion; "Let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me, and the censures they have passed upon me. Let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me, and take shame to themselves." (2.) If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. *They shall be ashamed and sore-vexed*, (so it may be read,) and that justly; they rejoiced that David was vexed, (v. 2, 3.) and therefore, as usually, it returns upon themselves, they also shall be sore-vexed. They that will not give glory to God, shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him, and to trust in him, in the greatest straits and difficulties.

PSALM VII.

It appears by the title, that this psalm was penned with reference to the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, 1. He applies himself to God for favour, v. 1. 2. II. He appeals to God concerning his innocence as

to those things whereof he was accused, v. 3. .5. III. He prays to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, v. 6. .9. IV. He expresses his confidence in God, that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him, v. 10. .16. V. He promises to give God the glory of his deliverance, v. 17. In this, David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is, in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

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

1. **O** LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me; 2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while *there is none to deliver.* 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands; 4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;) 5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah. 6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger; lift up thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes, therefore, return thou on high. 8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shiggaion is a song or fusalim; the word is used so only here and Hab. iii. 1. A wandering song, so sonnet: the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together. A charming song, so others; very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite. Or, more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul, named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which was unnecessary) exasperated Saul against him; one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of, (1 Sam. xxvi. 19.) that made mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord: the injuries men do us, should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord, his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful, that he was still in tune for sacred songs, and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses,

I. He puts himself under God's protection, and flies to him for succour and shelter; (v. 1.) "*Lord, save me, and deliver me from the power and malice of all them that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me.*" He pleads, 1. His

relation to God. "Thou art my God, and, therefore, whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my Shield; (Gen. xv. 1.) my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected." 2. His confidence in God; "Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee; in thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh." Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so: which is our case. 3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them; "Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey;" with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion, (2 Tim. iv. 17.) as David here compares Saul. 4. The failure of all other helpers; "Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise *there is none to deliver,*" v. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

II. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocence, as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the Searcher of hearts, concerning it, v. 3. .5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort, if our own consciences acquit us.

*Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi.*

*Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.*

Happy indeed, when not only they cannot prove their calumnies, (Acts xxiv. 13.) but when our hearts can disprove them, to our own satisfaction. 2. God is the Patron of wronged innocence. David had no court on earth to appeal to; his prince, who should have righted him, was his sworn enemy; but he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call *his God*. And here see,

(1.) What the indictment is, which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and, in order to that, levied war against him. This he utterly denies: he never did this, there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand, (v. 3.) he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul, when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, v. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did them mischief that had injured him.

(2.) What evidence he produces of his innocence: it is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of; (v. 4.) *I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.* By this it appeared, beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life—that, once and again, Providence so ordered it, that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him, that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he *cut off his skirt*, (1 Sam. xxiv. 4.) and afterward, when he *took away his spear*, (1 Sam. xxvi. 12.) to attest for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, it may turn to us for a testimony, more than we think of, another day.

(3.) What doom he would submit to, if he were guilty; (v. 5.) *Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death; and my good name when I am gone, let him lay my honour in the dust.* This intimates, [1.] That, if he had been indeed injurious to others,

he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that has his hand against every man, must count upon it that every man's hand will be against him. [2.] That, in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God, and beg of him to deliver him, or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous, dangerous, thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent, and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness. [3.] That he was abundantly satisfied in himself, concerning his innocency; it is natural to us to wish well to ourselves; and therefore, a curse to ourselves, if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any other. With such an oath, or imprecation, David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

III. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him; "Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them, and let them know that thou art so, v. 6. *In thine anger lift up thyself* to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, because of the rage, the furies, the outrages, (the word is plural,) of mine enemies." Those need not fear men's wrath against them, who have God's wrath for them. *Who knows the power of his anger?*

2. He prays that God would plead his cause; Awake for me to judgment; let my cause have a hearing to the judgment which thou hast commanded. That speaks, (1.) The divine power; as he blesses effectually, and is therefore said to *command the blessing*, so he judges effectually, and is therefore said to *command the judgment*, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it. (2.) The divine purpose and promise; "It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to right the injured, and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment." He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will, no doubt, execute it himself. Though he seem to connive at wrong, as one asleep, he will awake in due time, (lxxviii. 65.) and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects. He prays, (v. 7.) "*Return thou on high*, maintain thine own authority, resume thy royal throne of which they have despised the sovereignty, and the judgment-seat of which they have despised the sentence. Return on high, visibly, and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged that Heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause." Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven, (returned on high in his exalted state,) had all judgment committed to him. Or, it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men. He prays again, (v. 8.) "*Judge me*, judge for me, give sentence on my side."

To enforce this suit, [1.] He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court; *The Lord shall judge the people*, v. 8. It is his place; it is his promise. *God is the judge*; "Therefore, Lord,

judge me." He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore, no doubt, he shall do right, and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. [2.] He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires only to be judged, in this matter, according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken toward his preferment. [3.] He foretells that it would be much for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of his people, if God would appear for him; "*So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about*; therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thine house." *First*, They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers, and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore when they saw him in a fair way to the throne, they would greatly rejoice, and give thanks to God; crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to their land. *Secondly*, If David come into power, as God had promised him, he will take care to bring people to church, by his influence upon them, and the ark shall not be neglected, as it was in the days of Saul, 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

3. He prays, in general, for the conversion of sinners, and the establishment of saints; (v. 9.) "*O let the wickedness*, not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, *come to an end; but establish the just*." Here are two things which every one of us must desire, and may hope for. (1.) The period of sin; that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought are forsaken, and the stream which ran violently toward the world and the flesh, is driven back, and runs toward God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. When there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest; when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power broken, and the man of sin is destroyed; then the *wickedness of the wicked comes to an end*. And this is that which all that love God, and, for his sake, hate evil, desire and pray for. (2.) The perpetuity of righteousness; *but establish the just*. As we pray that the bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked, nor shocked by their malice; that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God, and in their resolution to persevere therein; may be firm to the interests of God and religion, and zealous in their endeavours to bring the *wickedness of the wicked to an end*. His plea to enforce this petition is, *For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins*; and therefore he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked, and knows how to bring it to an end: and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiassed conscience for us, that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11. God judgeth the

righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day. 12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. 14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David, having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part does, as it were, take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous, and the certain destruction of wicked people that continue impenitent.

I. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful Protector and Saviour, and the Patron of his oppressed innocency; (v. 10.) "*My defence is of God.*" Not only, God is my Defender, and I shall find him so, but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone; if I have defence, it must be of God. "*My shield is upon God,*" so some read it; there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Prov. xviii. 10. Two things David builds this confidence upon. 1. The particular favour God has for all that are sincere; *He saves the upright in heart*, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection. 2. The general respect he has for justice and equity; *God judgeth the righteous*; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. *God is a righteous Judge*, so some read it, who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

II. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his wicked persecutors, even as many of them as would not *repent, to give glory to God*. He reads their doom here, for their good, if possible, that they might cease from their enmity; or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them, nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands, 1. That they are children of wrath; they are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, is *angry with the wicked every day*. They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up *against the day of wrath*. As his mercies are new every morning toward his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked, even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in

the days of their devotion: for if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them, (John iii. 36.) and continual additions are made to it. 2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are; sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction:

(1.) God will destroy them; the destruction they are reserved for is, *destruction from the Almighty*, which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the *wrath of God*, v. 13, 14. It is here intimated, [1.] That the destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened, with that proviso; If he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but if he turn, it is implied that his sins shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of them that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die, and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. [2.] That if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general, (v. 13.) *He has prepared for him the instruments of death*, of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death for any creature; even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleases. *First*, Here is a variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows which wound and kill at a distance, those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner *flies from the iron weapon*, yet the *bow of steel shall strike him through*, Job xx. 24. *Secondly*, These instruments of death are all said to be *made ready*; God has them not to seek, but always at hand; *judgments are prepared for scorners*; *Tophet is prepared of old*. *Thirdly*, While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and *long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish*. *Fourthly*, The longer the destruction is delayed to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it fall, and lie for ever, if that time be not so improved, while God is waiting; the sword is in the whetting, and the bow in the drawing. *Fifthly*, The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely; for it is *ordained*, they are of old ordained to it. *Sixthly*, Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will *destroy themselves*, v. 14. 16. The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. [1.] It is described by the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, v. 14. The sinner's head with its politics conceives mischief, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays the plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions travails with iniquity, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what does it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood, it is a cheat upon himself, it is a lie in his right hand; he cannot compass what he intended; nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself; he brings forth *wind*, (Isa. xxvi. 18.) *stubble*, (Isa. xxxii. 11.)

death, (James i. 15.) that is, *falsehood*. [2.] By the pangs of a labouring man, that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it, and perishes in it. *First*, This is true, in a sense, of all sinners; they prepare destruction for themselves, by preparing themselves for destruction; loading themselves with guilt, and submitting themselves to their corruptions. *Secondly*, It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God, or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to *return upon their own heads*; what they designed for the shame and destruction of others proves to be their own confusion.

—Nec lex est justior ulla,
Quam, Necis artificis arte, perire sua.—

There is not a juster law than, That the author of a murderous contrivance should perish by it. Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm, we must do as David here does; (v. 17.) *praise the Lord according to his righteousness*; give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people, and of that just vengeance with which he will pursue them that afflict them; thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who, when his enemies deal proudly, shows that he is above them.

PSALM VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and adoration of, the glory and greatness of God, of which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably. It begins and ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed for proof, (v. 1.) *That God's name is excellent in all the earth!* And then it is repeated, as proved, (with a *quod erat demonstrandum*—which was to be demonstrated,) in the last verse. For the proof of God's glory, he gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified, I. For making known himself and his great name to us, v. 1. II. For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, v. 2. III. For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, v. 3, 4. IV. For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels, v. 5-8. This psalm is, in the New Testament, applied to Christ, and the work of our redemption which he wrought out; the honour given by the children of men to him, (v. 2. *Matt.* xxi. 16.) and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation, when he was made little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and honour, v. 5, 6. *Heb.* ii. 6-8. *1 Cor.* xv. 27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and Providence, we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

To the chief musician upon Githth. A psalm of David.

1. **O** LORD our LORD, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give to God the glory due to his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm, concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon *Githth*, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument, with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it upon the *Gittite*, that is, *Goliath the Gittite*, whom he vanquished and slew; (1 Sam. xvii.) that enemy was stilled by him who was, in comparison, but a babe and a suckling. The conjecture would be probable enough, but that

we find two other psalms with the same title, lxxxix. and lxxxiv.

Two things David here admires,

I. How plainly God displays his glory himself, v. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence, as the Lord, and his people's Lord; *O Lord, our Lord*. If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him, and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to show us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory: and we shall never think we can do that with affection enough, if we consider,

1. How bright God's glory shines even in this lower world; *How excellent is his name in all the earth!* The works of creation and Providence evince and proclaim to all the world, that there is an infinite Being, the Fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign Ruler, powerful Protector, and bountiful Benefactor, of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth! The light of it shines in men's faces every where; (*Rom.* i. 20.) if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language, but the voice of God's name either is heard in it, or *may* be. But this looks further, to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which, before, was great in *Israel* only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to see *God's great salvation*, *Mark* xvi. 15, 16.

2. How much brighter it shines in the upper world; *Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.* (1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures, and those that shine brightest. (2.) Whereas we on this earth only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. (3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, who is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

II. How powerfully he discovers it by the weakest of his creatures; (v. 2.) *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength*, or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, *Matth.* xxi. 16. This bespeaks the glory of God, I. In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children, (when they first come into the world, the most helpless of all animals,) the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness; and the more sensibly, because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it, that we *died not from the womb*, that the knees then prevented us, *and the breasts, that we should suck*. "This is such an instance of thy goodness, as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, There is no God." 2. In the kingdom of Providence; in the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him, and others that do not, (*Isa.* xlv. 4.) and these such as have been babes and sucklings; nay, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings. 3. In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. It is here foretold, that, by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, *unlearned and ignorant men*, (*Acts* iv. 13.) mean and despicable, and

by the foolishness of their preaching, the Devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were by the sound of rams'-horns. The gospel is called *the arm of the Lord, and the rod of his strength*; this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages; yea, we hear children crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applies this, (Matth. xxi. 16.) and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he teaches them knowledge, and makes them to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, Isa. xxviii. 9. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments; and confounds the noble, wise and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish, things of the world, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power might the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. This he does, because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers; see Acts iv. 14.—vi. 10. The Devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was, in a great measure, stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves not suffered to speak.

In singing this, let us give God the glory of his great name, and of the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth, conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended, not only with our praises, but with our best wishes. Praise is perfected, God is in the highest degree glorified, when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: 7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. 9. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God, by recounting the honours he has put upon man, especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory; how God has condescended in favour to man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

I. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense; (v. 3.) *I consider thy heavens*, and there, particularly, *the moon and the stars*. But why does he not take no-

tice of the sun, which much excels them all? Probably because it was in a night-walk, by moonlight, that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars, which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator. Observe, 1. It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them; by this, among other things, man is distinguished from the beasts, that, while they are so framed as to look downward to the earth, man is made erect to look upward toward heaven; *Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri jussit*—*To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the heavens*, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us, unless we consider it. 2. We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens; not only as all the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner; *The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's*, (cxv. 16.) they are the place of the residence of his glory, and we are taught to call him *Our Father in heaven*. 3. They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers; he made them, he made them easily; the stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm, it was done with a word; he made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers. 4. Even the lesser lights, the moon and stars, show the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. 5. The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government; God not only made them, but ordained them; and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here, to magnify God's favour to man? (1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world, we may well wonder that he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man; that he who resides in that bright and blessed part of the creation, and governs it, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth; see cxiii. 5, 6. (2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heaven are divided unto all nations, (Deut. iv. 19. Gen. i. 15.) we may well say, "*Lord, what is man*, that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven, with an eye to him and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so much consulted in the making of the lights of heaven, and directing their motions!"

II. How he expresses this admiration; (v. 4.) "*Lord, what is man!* (*Enosh*, sinful, weak, miserable, man, a creature so forgetful of thee, and his duty to thee,) *that thou art thus mindful of him*; that thou takest cognizance of him, and of his actions and affairs; that, in the making of the world, thou hadst a respect to him! What is the son of man, that thou visitest him; that thou not only feedest him and clothest him, protectest him and providest for him, in common with other creatures, but visitest him, as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him, and concern thyself for him! What is man, (so mean a creature,) that he should be thus honoured, (so sinful a creature,) that he should be thus countenanced and favoured!" Now this refers,

1. To mankind in general. Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, (Job xxv. 6.) yet God puts a respect upon him, and shows him abundance of kindness; man is, above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of Providence. For,

(1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings

We may be sure he takes place of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a *little lower than the angels*, (v. 5.) lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels, that he may be truly said to be but a *little lower than they*, and is in order next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay; but the children of the resurrection shall be *ισάγγελοι*—*angels' peers*, (Luke xx. 36.) and no longer lower than they.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities; *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*; he that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for, having *made him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven*, (Job xxxv. 11.) he has made him fit to rule them, and it is fit that they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

(3.) He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has *made man to have dominion over them*, v. 6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation, (Gen. i. 28.) and was renewed after the flood, Gen. ix. 2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself, not only of the labour, but of the productions and lives, of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all *fiut under his feet*. He specifies some of the inferior animals; (v. 7, 8.) not only sheep and oxen, which man takes care of and provides for, but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the flood, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element, and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man his arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger, and many of them are much swifter, than he, yet, one way or other, he is too hard for them, Jam. iii. 7. *Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed*; he has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion; *Rise, Peter, kill and eat*, Acts x. 13. Every time we partake of fish or of fowl, we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands; and it is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

2. But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ; of him we are taught to expound it, (Heb. ii. 6-8.) where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that son of man, here spoken of, whom God has *crowned with glory and honour*, and made to *have dominion over the works of his hands*. And it is certain that the greatest favour that ever was showed to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great, and far more than we deserve.

We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it, and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it,

(1.) That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and in that nature humbled himself. He became the *Son of man*, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him; which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said, (Heb. ii. 9.) *For the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, he was*

crowned with glory and honour. God visited him; having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, *for a little while*, (so the apostle interprets it,) made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

(2.) That, in that nature, he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself; *crowned him with glory and honour*, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were; set him at his own right hand; constituted him not only the *Head of the church*, but *Head over all things to the church*; and gave all things into his hand, intrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence, in conjunction with, and subserviency to, the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet; and, even in the days of his flesh, he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute.

With good reason, therefore, does the psalmist conclude as he began, *Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power! In singing this, and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him, and all his enemies made his footstool.

PSALM IX.

In this psalm, I. David praises God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies and the enemies of his country, (v. 1-6.) and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, v. 11, 12. II. He prays to God, that he might have still further occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances, and the confusion of his enemies, v. 13, 14, 19, 20. III. He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, (v. 7, 8.) protecting his oppressed people, (v. 9, 10, 18.) and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, v. 15-17. This is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been, in part, destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool; which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory, and we may take the comfort.

To the chief musician upon Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart, I will show forth all thy marvellous works. 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High. 3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause, thou sittest in the throne judging right. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6. O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. 7. But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment; 8. And he shall judge the

world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon *Muth-labben*, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tune, or musical instrument, to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies he is here triumphing in the defeat of, are the Philistines, and the other neighbouring nations that opposed his settlement in the throne; whom he contested with, and subdued, in the beginning of his reign, 2 Sam. v. 8.

In these verses,

I. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies, and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, v. 1, 2. Note, 1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. 2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart. 3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should take occasion thence to remember former mercies, and so to show forth all his marvellous works. 4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy; *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*. 5. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only; *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*, not in the gift so much as in the Giver. 6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms. 7. When God has showed himself to be above the proud enemies of the church, we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the Most High. 8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed; see Rev. xii. 10.—xix. 5.—xv. 3, 4.

II. He acknowledges the almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with, or stand before, v. 3. But, 1. They are forced to turn back; their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation. 2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish; even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a lost man, and shall prevail no more; see Esth. vi. 13. 3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done, which a man does with his very presence; with *that*, God confounds his enemies, such a presence has he. This was fulfilled, when our Lord Jesus, with one word, *I am he*, made his enemies to *fall back at his presence*; (John xviii. 6.) he could, at the same time, have made them perish. 4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion, we must ascribe it to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

III. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf; (v. 4.) "*Thou hast maintained my right and my cause*, my righteous cause; when that came on, thou satest in the throne, judging right. Observe, 1. God sits in the

throne of judgment; to him it belongs to decide controversies, to determine appeals, to right the injured, and to punish the injurious; for he has said, *Vengeance is mine*. 2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God, that he should pervert justice. If there seems to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet these, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may serve to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to rights. 3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it, and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

IV. He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends those triumphs with his praises, v. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen, and wicked people, who were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. 1. He had checked them; "*Thou hast rebuked the heathen*; hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them." This he did, before he destroyed them, that they might have taken warning by the rebukes of Providence, and so have prevented their own destruction. (2.) He had cut them off; *Thou hast destroyed the wicked*. The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice, and destructive power, in this world. (3.) He has buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy; had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

V. He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against; (v. 6.) *Thou hast destroyed cities*. Either, "Thou, O enemy, hast destroyed our cities, at least, in intention and imagination;" or, "Thou, O God, hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country." It may be taken either way; for the psalmist will have the enemy to know, 1. That their destruction is just; and that God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done, and designed, against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them, (when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles,) and destroyed their cities and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them; but now the wheel was turned upon them, their destructions of Israel were come to a perpetual end, they shall now cease to spoil, and must themselves be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. 2. That it is total and final, such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So devouring a thing is time, and, much more, such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins, that their very memorial is perished, and those who have sought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

VI. He comforts himself, and others, in God, and pleases himself with the thoughts of him.

1. With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish, and forgotten; *but the Lord shall endure for ever*, v. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, xxix. 10.—xciii. 2.

2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in

government and judgment; *He has prepared his throne*, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel. It is the great support and comfort of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening, and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God now rules the world, and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He does all, every day, he will do all, at the last day, according to the eternal, unalterable, rules of equity; (*v. 8.*) *He shall judge the world*, all persons and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people, shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord, who endures for ever, is their everlasting Strength and Protection; he that judges the world, will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed; (*v. 9.*) *He will be a refuge for the oppressed*; a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, in time of trouble. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world, and to have troublous times appointed to them; perhaps God may not immediately appear for them as their Deliverer and Avenger; but, in the midst of their distresses, they may by faith fly to him as their Refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have, that make God their Refuge; (*v. 10.*) "*They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee, as I have done;*" (for the grace of God is the same in all the saints,) "and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake them that seek thee;" for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note, (1.) The better God is known, the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom, will trust him *further than they can see him*; (Job xxxv. 14.) those who know him to be a God of almighty power, will trust him when creature-confidences fail, and they have nothing else to trust to, (2 Chron. xx. 12.) and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness, will trust him, *though he slay them*; Job xiii. 15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care, and trust in him at all times, even to the end. (2.) The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto. If we trust God, we shall seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. (3.) God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him, and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he does not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. 13. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; con-

sider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: 14. That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation. 15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that they made*: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16. The LORD is known *by the judgment which he executeth*: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsion. Selah. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God. 18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. 19. Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight. 20. Put them in fear, O LORD; *that* the nations may know themselves *to be but men*. Selah.

In these verses,

I. David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, *v. 11.* Those who believe God is greatly to be praised, not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it, and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it; *Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion.* As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type: there he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises, we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their Protector and Patron. He resolved himself to show forth God's marvellous works, (*v. 1.*) and here he calls upon others to declare among the people his doings: he commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it; to sing praises, not, as hitherto, to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen, that the Lord has *done great things for his people Israel*, cxxvi. 3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines, and their other wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously, and given them no quarter, *v. 12.* When God comes to make inquisition for blood by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembers them, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word, (Deut. xxxii. 43.) *He will avenge the blood of his servants.* Note, There is a day coming, when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and avenge what has been shed unjustly; see Isa. xxvi. 21. Jer. li. 35. In that day, it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, (lxxxii. 14.) when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, neither the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers, but that both are sealed up among his treasures.

II. David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him. He prays, 1. That God would be compassionate to him; (v. 13.) "*Have mercy upon me, who, having misery only, and no merit, to speak for me, must depend upon mere mercy for relief.*" 2. That he would be concerned for him; he is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God; but refers himself to the wisdom and will of God, in this modest request; "Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit." He pleads, (1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered of them that hated him; and hatred is a cruel passion. (2.) The experience he had had of divine succours, and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required; "*O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death.*" We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may thence take encouragement to hope, that in all our distresses he will be a very pleasant help to us. (3.) His sincere purpose to praise God, when his victories should be completed; (v. 14.) "Lord, save me; not that I may have the comfort and credit of it, but that thou mayest have the glory, *that I may show forth all thy praise, and that publicly, in the gates of the daughter of Zion;*" there God was said to dwell, (v. 11.) and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

III. David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come. 1. In this world, v. 15, 16. God executes judgment upon them, when the measure of their iniquities is full, and does it so, as, (1.) To put shame upon them, and make their fall inglorious; for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged, (vii. 15.) they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the insnaring of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines, they were the aggressors, 2 Sam. v. 17, 22. And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it, that their persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion. (2.) So as to get honour to himself; *The Lord is known*, he makes himself known, by these judgments which he executes. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth; that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it. In these judgments, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist, therefore, adds here, a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, *Higgaion*; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations. 2. In the other world; (v. 17.) *The wicked shall be turned into hell*, as captives into the prison-house, even all the nations that forget God. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the

wickedness of the wicked. (2.) There are *nations* of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations, that never regard him, nor desire the knowledge of his ways. (3.) Hell will, at last, be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment; *Sheol*, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house; (xlix. 14.) and their being so numerous, will neither be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God, or the least impeachment of his goodness.

IV. David encourages the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, v. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished, and to have been for ever frustrated; but he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak: we may build upon it as undoubtedly true, that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

V. He concludes with prayer, that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church; "*Arise, O Lord,* (v. 19.) stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people." 1. "Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice. *Let not man prevail*, consult thine own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. *Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?*" 2. "Lord, reckon with them, *let the heathen be judged in thy sight*, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee, and the mischief done to thy people." Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight; and, when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent toward them, Rev. xiv. 10. 3. *Put them in fear, O Lord;* (v. 20.) strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble, and to flee when none pursues; and thereby he makes them know and own that they are but men; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to alarms. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know, and consider, themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his justice, in pleading his people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.

PSALM X.

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm; the scope and style are certainly different. In this psalm, I. David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, describes the dreadful pitch of impiety, at which they were arrived, (to the great dishonour of God, and the prejudice of his church and

people,) and notices the delay of God's appearing against them, v. 1.-11. 11. He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with the hopes that he would do so in due time, v. 12.-18.

1. **W**HY standest thou afar off, O LORD? *Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?* 2. The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth. 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God is not in all his thoughts. 5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: *for I shall never be* in adversity. 7. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity. 8. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages; in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. 9. He lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. 10. He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

David, in these verses, discovers,

I. A very great affection to God and his favour; for, in the time of trouble, that which he complains of most feelingly, is, God's withdrawing his gracious presence; (v. 1.) "*Why standest thou afar off*," as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name, and the injuries done to thy people?" Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off, and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off, and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault, it is because we judge by outward appearance, we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

II. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the time perilous, 2 Tim. iii. 1. He beholds the transgressors, and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report: not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as *these publicans*, (Luke xviii. 11.) much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God, and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better.

This long representation of the wickedness of the wicked, is here summed up in the first words of it, (v. 2.) *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor*; where two things are laid to their charge,

pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them, or will not yield to them, they malign, and hate with an inveterate hatred. Tyranny, both in state and church, owes its original to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage, and no prejudice to the sense; *Let them be taken*, as proud people often are, *in the devices that they have imagined*, v. 2. Let their counsels be turned headlong, and let them fall headlong by them.

These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly, therefore, did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

(1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He *boasts of his heart's desire*, boasts that he can do what he pleases, (as if God himself could not control him,) and that he has all he wished for, and has carried his point. Ephraim said, *I am become rich, I have found me out substance*, Hos. xii. 8. "Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?"

(2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth; for he *blesse*s the covetous, *whom the Lord abhors*. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons; God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their god, and idolize it; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them; *The friendship of the world is enmity to God*. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, xlix. 13. They applaud *them* as wise, whom God pronounces foolish; (Luke xii. 20.) they justify *them* as innocent, whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire them as happy in having their portion in this life, whom God declares, upon that account, truly miserable; *Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things*.

(3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him, and devotion to him; (v. 4.) the wicked, *through the pride of his countenance*, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance, (Prov. vi. 17.) *will not seek after God*; nor entertain the thoughts of him; *God is not in all his thoughts*, not in any of them. *All his thoughts are, that there is no God*. See here, [1.] The nature of impiety and irreligion; it is, *not seeking after God*, and *not having him in our thoughts*. No inquiry is made after him, (Job xxxv. 10. Jer. ii. 6.) there is no desire toward him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependence upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, that is, will not call upon him; they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but *no eye to God* in any of them, no submission to his will, nor aim at his glory. [2.] The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

(4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments; (v. 5.) *His ways are always grievous*; he is very daring and resolute in his sin-

ful courses, he will have his way, though ever so tiresome to himself, and vexatious to others; he travels with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments (what he commands, and what he threatens for the breach of his commands) are *far above out of his sight*; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God, nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, that he never saw God, and therefore does not know that there is a God; he is *in the height of heaven*, and *Quæ supra nos nihil ad nos*—*We have nothing to do with things above us*. Tell him of God's judgments, which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are *far above out of his sight*, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despises all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at them whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity; (v. 6.) *He hath said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved*; my goods are laid up for many years, and *I shall never be in adversity*: like Babylon, that said, *I shall be a lady for ever*, Isa. xlvii. 7. Rev. xviii. 7. Those are nearest ruin, who thus set it furthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors: for the gratifying of their pride and covetousness, and, in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors:

(1.) That they are very bitter and malicious; (v. 7.) *His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized, and cursed, with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

(2.) That they are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hid under the tongue, not to be discerned, for his mouth is full of deceit and vanity; he has learned of the Devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, Prov. xxvi. 26. He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses to compass his ends.

(3.) That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, *he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places*, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief; (v. 8.) not because he is ashamed of what he does, (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent,) nor because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account, (v. 11.) but because he is afraid, lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

(4.) That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, who never provoked them; against the poor, who cannot resist them; and over whom it will be no glory to triumph.

Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power, ought to protect the innocent, and provide for the poor; yet he will be the destroyer of those whose guardian he ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to *catch the poor*, and *draw them into their net*, get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to murder them; they hunt for the precious life. They are God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred, for his sake whose they are, and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: he lies in wait as a lion that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The Devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion, that seeks not *what*, but *whom*, he may devour.

(5.) That they are base and hypocritical; (v. 10.) *He crouches, and humbles himself*, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates, that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though ever so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul, when he hunted David. It intimates likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves, as if to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concerns, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them.

(6.) That they are very impious and atheistical, v. 11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness toward man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles; *He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten*. When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequences of it, and asked, how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, *God has forsaken the earth*, Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9. This is a blasphemous reproach, [1.] Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not, see what men do in this lower world. [2.] Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at, the most unnatural and inhuman villanies. [3.] Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not, or durst not, or was not inclined to it. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors, hope that God will, in due time, appear for them; for those that are abusive to them, are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion for the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will, in due time, right the injured, and reckon with the injurious.

12. Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thy hand: forget not the humble. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto

thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless. 15. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. 16. The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. 17. LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; 18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God: Wherein observe,

I. What he prays for; 1. That God would himself appear; (v. 12.) "*Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand*, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. *Arise, O Lord*, to the confusion of those who say that thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thine own cause, lift up thine hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thine everlasting arm be made bare." 2. That he would appear for his people; "*Forget not the humble, the afflicted*, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same; Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken." 3. That he would appear against their persecutors, v. 15. (1.) That he would disable them to do any further mischief; *Break thou the arm of the wicked*, take away his power, *that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared*, Job xxxiv. 30. We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged, (Dan. vii. 12.) that they might have time to repent. (2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done; "Seek out his wickedness; let that be all brought to light, which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let that be all brought to account, which he thought should for ever go unpunished; bring it out till thou find none, till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed.

II. What he pleads, for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself; "Lord, it is thine own cause that we beg thou wouldest appear in, the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished;" (v. 13.) *Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?* He does so; for he says, "*Thou wilt not require it*; thou wilt never call us to an account for what we do;" than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with astonishment, (1.) At the wickedness of the wicked; "Why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly?" It is a great trouble to good men, to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments; all are despised and made light of. *Wherefore do the wicked thus contemn God?* It is because they do not know him. (2.) At the patience and forbearance of God toward them; "Why are they suffered thus to contemn God? Why does he not immediately vindicate himself, and take vengeance on them?" It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety

and iniquity of these oppressors; (v. 14.) "*Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy*, that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts, of these oppressors; it is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it, and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand."

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him; "*The poor commits himself unto thee*, each of them does so, I among the rest. They rely on thee, as their Patron and Protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce, and at whose disposal they are willing to be. *They leave themselves with thee*," (so some read it,) "not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour, as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection; therefore protect them."

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. (1.) As a great God, he is *King for ever and ever*, v. 16. And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers, and the protection and praise of them that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal, but to the sovereign? *Help, my Lord, O King; Avenge me of mine adversary*. "Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their King, have the benefit of thy government, and find thee their Refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt, by an eternal judgment, dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves." (2.) As a good God; he is the Helper of the fatherless, (v. 14.) of those who have no one else to help them, and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to *defend the poor and fatherless*, (lxxvii. 3.) and therefore much more will he do it himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour, to be a Father to the fatherless, (lxxviii. 5.) a Helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them. (1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies; (v. 16.) *The heathen are perished out of his land*; the remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes, and goads in the sides, of Israel, are now, at length, utterly rooted out; and that is an encouragement to us to hope that God will, in like manner, break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, that were, in some respects, worse than heathens. (2.) He had heard and answered their prayers; (v. 17.) "Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed suppliant, *Seek, in vain*. Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours, which our fathers told us of?

6. He pleads their expectations from God, pursuant to their experience of him, "*Thou hast heard, therefore thou wilt cause thine ear to hear*, as vi. 9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation, to thy people the same; and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; why therefore may we not hope that he who has been, will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayer?" But observe, (1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may

we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working *upon* us, is the best earnest of his working *for* us. He prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for; makes us fit to receive it, and use it well, and then gives it unto us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it, (Prov. xvi. 1.) and take that as a leading favour. (2.) What he will do, in answer to prayer, v. 18. [1.] He will plead the cause of the persecuted; will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocence, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained. [2.] He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that *the man of the earth may no more oppress*. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor, whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him, now that he had been considering God's sovereignty. *First*, He is but a *man of the earth*, a man *out of the earth*, so the word is; sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean, and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, when he is but *man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass?* Isa. li. 12. He that protects us, is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us, but a man of the earth. *Secondly*, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word, Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive, (Rev. xx. 3.) no more oppress.

In singing these verses, we must commit religion's just, but injured, cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.

PSALM XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggle with, and triumph over, a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin thrown at him once and again. He was then advised to run his country; "No," says he, "I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground." Observe, I. How he represents the temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, v. 1. 3. II. How he answers it, and puts it to silence, with the consideration of God's dominion and providence, (v. 4.) his favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, v. 5. 7. In time of public fears, when the insults of the church's enemies are daring and threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **I**N the LORD put I my trust: how say I ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? 2. For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Here is,

1. David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence; *In the Lord put I my trust*, v. 1. Those that truly fear God, and serve him, are welcome to

put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints, who have taken God for their God, that they make him their Hope: even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only; gold is not their hope, nor horses and chariots their confidence, but God only: and therefore, when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the First Cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

2. His resentment of a temptation to the contrary; *How say ye to my soul*, which has thus returned to God as its Rest, and reposes in him, *Flee as a bird to your mountain?* to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler." This may be taken, either,

(1.) As the serious advice of his timorous friends, so many understood it, and with great probability. Some, that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him, and how maliciously he sought his life, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not to depend too much upon the anointing he had received, which, they thought, was more likely to occasion the loss of his head than to save it. That which grieved him in this motion, was, not that to flee now would savour of cowardice, and ill become a soldier, but that it would savour of unbelief, and would ill become a saint, who had so often said, *In the Lord put I my trust*. Taking it thus, the two following verses contain the reason with which these faint-hearted friends of David backed this advice. They would have him flee, [1.] Because he could not be safe where he was; (v. 2.) "Observe," say they, "how the wicked bend their bow; Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thine heart will not be thy security." See what an enmity there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman; what pains they take, what preparations they make, to do them a mischief; *they privily shoot at them, or in darkness*, that they may not see the evil designed, to avoid it, nor others, to prevent it; no, nor God himself, to punish it. [2.] Because he could be no longer useful where he was; "For," say they, "if the foundations be destroyed," (as they were by Saul's mal-administration,) "if the civil state and government be uninged and all out of course," (lxxxv. iii.—lxxxii. 5.) "what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances? Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered; whatever the righteous can do, signifies nothing." *Abi in cellam, et dic, Miserere mei, Domine—Away to thy cell, and there cry, Pity me, O Lord*. Many are hindered from doing the service they might do to the public, in difficult times, by a despair of success.

(2.) It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. "You say, God is your Mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be." Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying, *There is no help for them in God*, xiv. 6.—iii. 2. The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail them, are a riddle to a carnal world, and are ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm. In which, [1.] He

complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him; (*v. 2.*) *They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows*; and we are told, (*lxiv. 3.*) what they are, even bitter words, such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. [*2.*] He resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, *v. 3.* He looks upon this suggestion as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon; "If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest, and can banter them out of that, you ruin them, and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable." The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned, in interest, as well as duty, to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for if these be destroyed, if we let these go, *What can the righteous do?* Good people would be undone, if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4. The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. 5. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: *this shall be the portion of their cup.* 7. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God, engages him to cleave so much the closer to his first principles, and to review them, which he here does, abundantly to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was, the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways, and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to; hence such an evil thought as this, was apt to arise, *Surely it is vain to serve God*, and we may call the proud happy; but, in order to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

1. That there is a God, a God in heaven; *The Lord is in his holy temple* above; there he is out of our sight, but we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss, and at their wit's end: no, they have a God, and they know where to find him, and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their Father in heaven. Or, He is in his holy temple, that is, in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, "Who shall go up to heaven, to fetch us thence a God to trust to?" No, the Word is nigh us, and God in the Word; his Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

2. That this God governs the world; the Lord has not only his residence, but his throne, in heaven, and he has *set the dominion thereof in the earth*; (*Job xxxviii. 33.*) for, having *prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all*, *ciii. 19.* Hence the heavens are said to rule, *Dan. iv. 26.* Let us by faith see God on his throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and

majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim, to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

3. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character; *His eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men*; he not only sees them, but he sees through them; not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men *seem* to be, but he knows what they *are*, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is, when he has tried it. God is said to try *with his eyes*, and *his eye-lids*, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err, or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men, we are sure, is according to truth.

4. That, if he afflict good people, it is for their trial, and therefore for their good, *v. 5.* The Lord tries all the children of men, that he may do them justice; but he tries the righteous, that he may *do them good in their latter end*, *Dent. viii. 16.* Let not that therefore shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

5. That, however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail a while, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

(1.) He is a holy God, and therefore hates them, and cannot endure to look upon them; *The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth*; for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it does certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those who have thus ill-made themselves. Dr. Hammond offers another reading of this verse; *The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked*; (distinguishes infallibly between them, which is more than we can do;) and *he that loveth violence hateth his own soul*, that is, persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves, (*Prov. viii. 36.*) as follows here.

(2.) He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, *v. 6.* Their punishment will be, [*1.*] *Inevitable*; *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares*. Here is a double metaphor, to denote the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven, (*Job xx. 23.*) against which there is no fence, and from which there is no escape; see *Josh. x. 11.* *1 Sam. ii. 10.* It shall surprise them, as a sudden shower sometimes surprises the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes. [*2.*] *Very terrible*; it is *fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*, which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of the *vengeance of eternal fire*, *Jude 7.* The fire of God's wrath, fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell, and to the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in, at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! That is it that is here meant.

that is it that shall be the portion of their cup, the heritage appointed them by the Almighty, and allotted to them, Job xx. 29. This is the cup of trembling, which shall be put into their hands, which they must *drink the dregs of*, lxxv. 8. Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. They who choose the Lord for the Portion of their cup, shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice, (xvi. 5.) but they who reject his grace, shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, Jer. xxv. 15. Isa. li. 17. Hab. ii. 16.

6. That, though honest good people may be run down, and trampled upon, yet God does and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them, and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him; so that, whosoever toucheth them, *toucheth the apple of his eye*, v. 7. (1.) He loves them, and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it, and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, ciii. 6. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he does, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. (2.) He looks graciously upon them; *His countenance doth behold the upright*; he is not only at peace with them, but well-pleased in them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts, by letting them know that he is so. He, like a tender Father, looks upon them with pleasure, and they, like dutiful children, are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm, we must encourage and engage ourselves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocence, and make us happy, must dread his frowns as worse than death, and desire his favour as better than life.

PSALM XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm, in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends, and the insolence of his sworn enemies. I. He begs help of God, because there were none among men whom he durst trust, v. 1, 2. II. He foretells the destruction of his proud and threatening enemies, v. 3, 4. III. He assures himself and others, that, how ill soever things went now, (v. 8.) God would preserve and secure to himself his own people, (v. 5, 7.) and would certainly make good his promises to them, v. 6. Whether this psalm was penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated for a bad reign; and perhaps David, in spirit, foresaw that some of his successors would bring things to as bad a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm for the use of the church then.— *O tempora, O mores!— Oh the times and the manners!*

To the chief musician upon Sheminith. A psalm of David.

1. **H**ELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. 2. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak.* 3. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things; 4. Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the

needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety *from him that puffeth at him.* 6. The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. 8. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This psalm furnishes us with good thoughts for bad times, in which, though the prudent will keep silent, (Amos v. 13.) because a man may be made an offender for a word, yet a man may comfort himself, in such a day, with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand.

I. Let us see here, what it is that makes the times bad, and when they may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world, what it is, in their account, that makes the times bad; they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war, make the times bad; but the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature; (2 Tim. iii. 1.) *Perilous times shall come, for iniquity shall abound; and that is the thing David here complains of.*

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad; (v. 1.) *When the godly man ceases, and the faithful fail.* Observe how these two characters are here put together, the *godly* and the *faithful*. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without honesty. Godly men are *faithful* men, *fast* men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to *cease and fail*, either by death, or by desertion, or by both. Those that were godly and faithful were taken away, and those that were left were sadly degenerated, and were not what they had been; so that there were few or no good people, that were Israelites indeed, to be met with. Perhaps he means, that there were no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he means there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had 7000 who kept their integrity; (Rom. xi. 3.) or he means that there were few in comparison; there was a general decay of religion and virtue: the times are bad, very bad, when it is so; not a man to be found, that executes judgment, Jer. v. 1.

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad; (v. 2.) when men are generally so profligate, that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences, and professions of friendship. Thus they speak vanity, (falsehood and a lie,) every one to his neighbour; with flattering lips and a double heart they will kiss and kill, (as Joab did Abner and Amasa in David's own time,) smile in your face, and cut your throat. This is the Devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed, when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with; when an honest man knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a guide, Mic. vi. 5, 6. Jer. ix. 4, 5. Woe to those who help to make the times thus perilous.

3. When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred,

then the times are very bad; when proud sinners are arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue, our lips are our own, and we may say what we will; *who is lord over us*, either to restrain us, or to call us to account?" *v. 4.* This bespeaks, (1.) A proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods independent and self-sufficient; infallible in their knowledge of good and evil, and therefore fit to be oracles; irresistible in their power, and therefore fit to be lawgivers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak and secure its being done. (2.) An insolent contempt of God's dominion, as if he had no propriety in them; *Our lips are our own*—an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth, in whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in. Their language would intimate that he has no authority either to command them, or to judge them; *Who is lord over us?* Like Pharaoh, *Exod. v. 2.* This is as absurd and unreasonable as the former, for He in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs be, by an indisputable title, Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad: this is implied, (*v. 5.*) where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them, merely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly, bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin, and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart; see *x. 5.*

5. When wickedness abounds, and goes barefaced, under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, *v. 7.* When the vilest men are exalted to places of trust and power, who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronise and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation, by their own example; then the wicked walk on every side, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, debauch, and destroy, others: they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom, and there is none to check or control them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, though they are ever so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious, the scripture calls a *vile person*, *Dan. xi. 21.* But it is bad with a kingdom, when such are preferred; no marvel if wickedness then grows impudent and insolent. *When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.*

II. Let us now see what good things we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be reserved for, we cannot tell.

When times are thus bad, it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with; (*v. 1.*) "*Help, Lord, for the needy man ceaseth.*" All other helps and helpers fail; even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, they are gone, and therefore whither shall we seek but to thee?" Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, *Help, Lord!* The bounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. "Help, Lord, help the virtuous; few seek to hold fast their

integrity, and to stand in the gap; help to save thine own interest in the world from sinking. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*"

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the control of men, and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips, that give the traitor's kiss, and speak words softer than oil, when war is in the heart; he will pluck out *the tongue that speaks proud things* against God and religion, *v. 3.* Some translate it as a prayer, "May God cut off those false and spiteful lips;" *Let lying lips be put to silence.*

3. That God will, in due time, work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors; (*v. 5.*) *Now will I arise, saith the Lord.* This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer, "Help, Lord," says he; "I will," says God: "here I am, with seasonable and effectual help. (1.) It is seasonable, in the fittest time. [1.] When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence, when they say, *Who is lord over us?* then is God's time to let them know, to their cost, that he is above them. [2.] When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt, by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel, when they were most dejected, and Pharaoh was most elevated; *Now will I arise.* Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocence; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all others the fittest time, *cii. 13.* It is effectual; *I will set him in safety*, or in salvation; not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will *bring him out into a wealthy place*; (*lxvi. 12.*) so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but *the words of the Lord are pure words*, (*v. 6.*) not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, or a crucible. It denotes, (1.) The sincerity of God's word; every thing is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise; it does not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design toward us than our own good. (2.) The preciousness of God's word; it is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. (3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so, tried it and it never deceived them, or frustrated their expectations; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *Experto crede*—*Trust one that has made trial*; they have found it so. Probably, this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes that they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed; but the words of God are what we may rely upon; the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.

5. That God must secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are; (*v. 7.*) *Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.* This intimates, that, as long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will threaten by their wretched arts to ruin religion, by *wearing out the*

saints of the most High, Dan. vii. 25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest, and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, (1.) From being debauched by them and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works; in times of general apostasy, the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them; the church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times, God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

PSALM XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion, does not appear, but, in general, I. David sadly complains that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, v. 1, 2. II. He earnestly prays to God to consider his case, and comfort him, v. 3, 4. III. He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance to be as good as wrought, v. 5, 6.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **H**OW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having sorrow in my heart daily*? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? 3. Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*; 4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. 5. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

I. His troubles extort complaints; (v. 1, 2.) and the afflicted have liberty to *pour out their complaint before the Lord*, cii. title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit, to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have freedom of speech, *παρρησία*. Observe here,

1. What David complains of.

(1.) God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former loving-kindness which he had showed him, and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy; had forgotten that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Zion said, *My God has forgotten me*; (Isa. xlix. 14.) Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord*, Isa. xl. 27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, goodness, and

faithfulness, of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet, when it arises from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it, and repent of it. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him: and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

(2.) His own uneasiness. [1.] He was racked with care that filled his head; *I take counsel in my soul*; "I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii*—have no friend to advise with, that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself; but none of my projects are likely to take effect, so that I am at my wit's end, and in a continual agitation." Anxious cares are heavy burthens with which good people often load themselves more than they need. [2.] He was overwhelmed with sorrow that filled his heart; *I have sorrow in my heart daily*. He had a constant disposition to sorrow, and it preyed upon his spirits; not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief; *the clouds returned after the rain*. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saint's daily bread; our Master himself was a Man of sorrows.

(3.) His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul, his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon; "How long shall it be thus?" And, "Shall it be thus for ever?" Long afflictions try our patience, and often tire it. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always; despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy, begin, at last, to be without hope; "Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return, at length, in mercy to me, and then I shall the more easily bear my present troubles."

II. His complaints stir up his prayers, v. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God, and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

1. What his petitions are; *Consider my case, hear my complaints, and lighten mine eyes*. (1.) "Strengthen my faith;" for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through, the things of sense. "Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles, and to foresee a happy issue of them." (2.) "Guide my way, enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me." (3.) "Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation." That which revives the drooping spirits, is said to *enlighten the eyes*, 1 Sam. xiv. 27. Ezra ix. 8. "Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant."

2. What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God and interest in him; *O Lord my God*; and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not lightened quickly, (1.) He concludes that he must perish; "I shall *sleep the sleep of death*, I cannot live under the weight of all this care and

grief." Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it. (2.) That then his enemies would triumph; "*Lest mine enemy say, So would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall.*" It would gratify the pride of his enemy; he will say, "I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God;" it would gratify the malice of his enemies; *They will rejoice when I am moved.* And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

III. His prayers are soon turned into praises; (v. 5, 6.) *But my heart shall rejoice, and I will sing to the Lord.* What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm, we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our *countenance will be no more sad*, 1 Sam. i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. "My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses, *I have trusted in the mercy of God*, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet *I trusted in the mercy of God*; and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset." And still *I do trust in thy mercy*; so some read it. "I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do well for me at last." This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that *hope in his mercy*, cxlvii. 11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with *joy in his salvation*; for joy and peace come by *believing*, Rom. xv. 13. *Believing, ye rejoice*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should *rejoice in that salvation*. Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His *joy in God's salvation* would fill his mouth with *songs of praise*; (v. 6.) "*I will sing unto the Lord*, sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly; though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it; he has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last; being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well. But he speaks of it as a thing past; *He has dealt bountifully with me*; because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawals, sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

PSALM XIV.

It does not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned, nor whether it on any particular occasion. Some say, David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are mere

conjectures, which have not certainly enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The apostle, in quoting part of this psalm, (Rom. iii. 10, &c.) to prove that *Jews and Gentiles are all under sin*, (v. 9.) and that *all the world is guilty before God*, (v. 19.) leads us to understand it, in general, as a description of the depravity of the human nature, the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of *the world that lies in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ, there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him, as in ii, xvi, xxii, and others; so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our wound by sin, there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and the other oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 3d to this, (except the 8th,) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him; now here he traces all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees that not his enemies only, but all the children of men, were thus corrupted. Here is, I. A charge exhibited against a wicked world, v. 1. II. The proof of the charge, v. 2, 3. III. A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it, v. 4, 5, 6. IV. A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, v. 7.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; *there is none that doeth good.* 2. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3. They are all gone aside, they are *all together become filthy*; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

If we apply our hearts, as Solomon did, (Eccl. vii. 25.) *to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness*, these verses will assist us in the search, and will show us that sin is exceeding sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemical.

1. See how malignant it is, (v. 1.) in two things, (1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin; *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* We are sometimes tempted to think, "Surely there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days;" but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety, as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe, [1.] The sinner here described; he is one that *said in his heart, There is no God*; he is an atheist. There is no *Elohim*, no Judge or Governor of the world, no Providence presiding over the affairs of men. They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He says *this in his heart*; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself with the fancy, that it is possible there may be none; he cannot be *sure* there is one, and therefore he is willing to *think there is none*. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly in *his heart*, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience, and the inbolddening of himself in his evil ways. [2.] The character of this sinner; he is a fool, he is simple and unwise; and this is an evidence of it: he is wicked and profane; and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal

of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a *discerner of these thoughts*, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them. *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind. No man will say, *There is no God*, till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate; *They are become filthy*, (v. 3.) putrid. All their faculties are so disordered, that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. They are corrupt indeed; for, [1.] They do no good, but are the unprofitable burthens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. [2.] They do a great deal of hurt; they have *done abominable works*, for such all sinful works are; sin is an abomination to God, it is that *abominable thing which he hates*, (Jer. xlv. 4.) and, sooner or later, it will be so to the sinner, it will be *found to be hateful*, (xxxvii. 2.) an *abomination of desolation*, making desolate, Matth. xxiv. 15. This follows upon their saying, *There is no God*: for they that *profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16.

2. See how epidemical this disease is; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a Witness, and he is an Eye-Witness, v. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) His inquiry; *The Lord looked down from heaven*, a place of prospect, which commands this lower world; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the *children of men*, and the question was, *Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God, and set him before them*. He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man, if he was to be found, though ever so obscure; but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world. (2.) The result of this inquiry, v. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, *They are all gone aside*, the apostasy is universal, *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*. Till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change, whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God had made the world, he looked upon his own work, and *all was very good*; (Gen. i. 31.) but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and, behold, all was very bad, (Gen. vi. 5.) every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. In singing this, let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. 5. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. 6. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor; because the LORD is his refuge. 7. Oh that

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

In these verses, the psalmist endeavours,

1. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shows them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see, their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here, (1.) Their wickedness; this is described in four instances. [1.] They are themselves *workers of iniquity*; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. [2.] They *eat up God's people* with as much greediness as they eat bread; such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors, to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it, or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's brethren *cast him into a pit*, and then *sat down to eat bread*, Gen. xxxvii. 24, 25. See Mic. iii. 2, 3. [3.] They *call not upon the Lord*. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? [4.] They *shame the counsel of the poor*, and upbraid them with making God their Refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, xi. 1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it, that are well-inclined; with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion and religious people, will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged-tools, and dangerous persecuting those that make God their Refuge. *Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong*. He shows them, (2.) Their folly; *They have no knowledge*; this is obvious, for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God. (3.) Their danger; (v. 5.) *There were they in great fear*; there, where they ate up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors: they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors, who have been made like Pashur, *Magor-missabib*—*Terrors to themselves*, and all about them. They that will not fear God, perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

2. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, (1.) With what they have; they have God's presence; (v. 5.) *He is in the generation of the righteous*; they have his protection; (v. 6.) *The Lord is their Refuge*. This is as much their security, as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day, it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners, to see God own the

generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered. (2.) With what they hope for; and that is the *salvation of Israel*, v. 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance, that God would in due time *turn again his captivity*, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation, which, in the fulness of time, was to come out of Zion, salvation from sin, that great salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected to *come to Zion*; to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. The world is bad; Oh that the Messiah would come and change its character! There is a universal corruption; Oh for the times of reformation! These will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God *turn again the captivity of his people*; for the Redeemer shall *ascend up on high, and lead captivity captive*, and Jacob shall then rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's King will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy, of every Israelite indeed; with the assurance of that, we should, in singing this, comfort ourselves, and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners, and sufferings of saints.

PSALM XV.

The scope of this short but excellent psalm, is, to show us the way to heaven, and to convince us, that, if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the Way, and in whom we must walk as our Way, has also showed us the same way that is here prescribed, (*Math. xix. 17.*) *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* In this psalm, I. By the question, (v. 1.) we are directed and excited to inquire the way. II. By the answer to that question, in the rest of the psalm, we are directed where to walk, v. 2. . 5. III. By the assurance given in the close of the psalm, of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters, we are encouraged to walk in that way, v. 5.

A psalm of David.

1 **L**ORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3. *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. 4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. 5. *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

Here is,

I. A very serious and weighty question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion; (v. 1.) "*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?*" Let me know who shall go to heaven." Christ, who by name (in this way, the Lord only knows them that are his) but who by description; "What kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours?" This supposes that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage; that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their

birth and blood; all shall not *abide in God's tabernacle*, that have Abraham to their father, but, according as men's hearts and lives are, accordingly will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, *Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle?* Luke xviii. 18. Acts xvi. 30.

1. Observe whom this inquiry is addressed to; to God himself. Note, Those that would find the way to heaven, must look up to God, must take direction from his word, and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his, and who not.

2. How it is expressed in Old Testament language. (1.) By the *tabernacle* we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness-state, mean and moveable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? Who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to inquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle, who really have no part nor lot in the matter. (2.) By the *holy hill* we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints, that they dwell in that holy hill; they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves, that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

II. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular character of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion; *He walketh uprightly*, according to the condition of the covenant, (*Gen. xvii. 1.*) "*Walk before me, and be thou perfect,*" (it is the same word that is here used,) "and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient." He is really what he professes to be, is sound at heart, and can approve himself to God, in his integrity, in all he does; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he does not paint; an *Israelite indeed in whom is no guile*, John i. 47. 2 Cor. i. 12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. *He worketh righteousness*; he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and, in speaking to both, he speaks that which is *the truth in his heart*; his prayers, professions, and promises, to God, come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate, in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; he reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie, and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though ever so plausibly, will prove, in the end, to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours; but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is, in a particular manner, tender of his

neighbour's reputation, v. 3. He does no evil at all to his neighbour, willingly or designedly, nothing to offend or grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that golden rule of equity, To do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, though many, who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours, make nothing of that; if any man, in this matter, bridle not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbites not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others' faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification; he makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He does not take up a reproach, he neither raises it, nor receives it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silences it, Prov. xxv. 23. If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it, if he can; if not, it shall die with him, and go no further. His charity will cover a multitude of sins.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, v. 5. (1.) He thinks the better of no man's wickedness, for his pomp and grandeur; *In his eyes, a vile person is contemned.* Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing; so the word signifies. As dross, as chaff, and as salt that has lost its savour, they are vile in their choices, (Jer. ii. 13.) in their practices, Isa. xxxii. 6. For this, wise and good men condemn them, not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps, (1 Pet. ii. 17. Rom. xiii. 7.) but, in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying them, that they pity them, despising their gains, (Isa. xxxiii. 15.) as turning to no account; their dainties, (cxli. 4.) their pleasures, (Heb. xi. 24, 25.) as sapsless and insipid. They despise their society; (cxix. cxv. 2 Kings iii. 14.) they despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by them, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice, (ii. 1, 4.) and will shortly triumph in their fall, lii. 6, 7. God despises them, and they are of his mind. (2.) He thinks the worse of no man's piety, for his poverty and meanness, *but he knows them that fear the Lord.* He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine, more than wealth, or wit, or a great name among men, does, or can. He honours such, he esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation, and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to show them respect, or do them a good office, pleads their cause, and speaks of them with veneration, rejoices when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory, when they are gone, is precious with him. By this, we may judge of ourselves in some measure, What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for if he has promised, upon oath, to do any thing, though afterward it appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he adheres to it, and changes not, v. 4. See how weak-sighted and short-sighted even wise and good men may be; they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath: but see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and

his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, v. 5. (1.) Not by extortion; *He putteth not out his money to usury*, that he may live at ease upon the labours of others, while he is in a capacity for improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity, for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being, by art and labour, as improvable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by Providence. (2.) Not by bribery; He will not take a reward against the innocent; if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not, for any gain, or hope of it, to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

III. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion; He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever, cxxv. 1. Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a Rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. *He that doeth these things, shall never be moved;* shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom; temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace, or his future bliss.

In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive, at last, at that holy hill, where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection, (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption,) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, *Acts* ii. 24.—xiii. 36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. I. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good Christians, professing his confidence in God; (v. 1.) his consent to him; (v. 2.) his affection to the people of God; (v. 3.) his adherence to the true worship of God; (v. 4.) and his entire complacency and satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in him, v. 5.—7. II. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly, and at large, applied, *Acts* ii. 25, &c. David speaks concerning him, (not concerning himself,) *I fore-saw the Lord always before my face, &c.* And this he spake, *being a prophet*, v. 30, 31. He spake, I. Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer, in his services and sufferings, v. 8. 2. Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, v. 9.—11.

Michtam of David.

1. **P**RESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 2. *O my soul,* thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3. *But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* 4. Their sorrows shall be mul-

tiplied *that* hasten *after* another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. 5. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. 7. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.

This psalm is entitled *Michtam*, which some translate a *golden* psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true Treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

I. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it; (v. 1.) "*Preserve me, O God, from the deaths, and especially from the sins, to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust.*" Those that by faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine guidance, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

II. He recognizes his solemn dedication of himself to God, as his God; (v. 2.) "*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and therefore thou mayest venture to trust him.*" Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. *Adonai* signifies *My Stayer*, the Strength of my heart. 2. This must be done with our souls. "*O my soul, thou hast said it.*" Covenanting with God must be heart-work; all that is within us must be employed therein, and engaged thereby. 3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord, should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. "*Hast thou said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord? Say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never ungo it. Hast thou said it? Take the comfort of it, and live up to it.*" He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, and let thine eye be ever toward him."

III. He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints; (v. 2, 3.) *My goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints.* Observe, 1. Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord, must, like him, be good, and do good; we do not expect happiness without goodness. 2. Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extends not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services, he is not benefitted by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful men in the world, cannot be profitable to God, Job xxii. 2.—xxxv. 7. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do, it is all from him; so that we are indebted to him, not he, to us: David owns it, (1 Chron. xxix. 14.) *Of thine own have we given thee.* 3. If God be ours, we must, for his sake, extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth; for what is done to them, he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, (1.) There are saints in the earth; and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the

glory of God, are saints on earth. (2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent, ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, and then he accounts them excellent; they are precious in his sight and honourable, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their Glory, and a Diadem of beauty to them. (3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God, delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was a *companion of all that feared God*, (cxix. 63.) even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. (4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but, as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to show them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extend to us men, in whom he delighted, Prov. viii. 31. *For their sakes*, says he, *I sanctify myself*, John xvii. 19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

IV. He disclaims the worship of all false gods, and all communion with their worshippers, v. 4. Where, 1. He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after another god, being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would escape from them; their sorrows shall be multiplied, both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake, and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. They that multiply gods, multiply griefs, to themselves, for whoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. 2. He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them, nor with their unfruitful works of darkness; "*Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer*, not only because the gods they are offered to, are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous." At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine; but the Devil prescribed to his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. "*I will have nothing to do*" (says David) "*with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them, or respect to them.*" Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, showing the nature of the sacrifice he offered: it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law, (that was never named nor did he ever make any mention of it,) but his own blood; showing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Cæsar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

V. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his Portion and Happiness, (v. 5.) takes to himself the comfort of the choice, (v. 6.) and gives God the glory of it, v. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for its Portion and Happiness. "Most men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but this I say, *The Lord is the Portion of mine*

inheritance, and of my cup; the Portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him; let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts; let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state; and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more, to complete my felicity." Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God, in Christ, to be, (1.) The Portion of our inheritance in the other world; heaven is an inheritance, God himself is the Inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting, good, and look upon this world to be no more ours, than the country through which our road lies, when we are in a journey. (2.) The Portion of our cup in this world, with which we are nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs, who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint themselves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to balance all the grievances of this present time, and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion; "*Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou that hast by promise made over thyself to me, to be mine, wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of mine enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thine hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David." The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it; (v. 6.) *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;* those have reason to say so, that have God for their Portion, they have a worthy Portion, a goodly Heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? *Return unto thy Rest, O my soul,* and look no further. Note, Gracious persons, though they still covet more of God, never covet more *than* God; but, being satisfied of his loving-kindness, are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have, upon that account, reason to say, *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;* much more those who have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice; (v. 7.) "*I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel,* this counsel, to take him for my Portion and Happiness." So ignorant and foolish are we, that, if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore, if we have indeed taken God for our Portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of divine grace, directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praises of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and Spirit, his own *reins* also (his own thoughts) instructed him in the night-season; when he was silent and solitary. and retired

from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the *reins*;) (Jer. xvii. 10.) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning the duties arising out of this choice, catechized him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his Portion, by faith to live upon him and to him. Those who have God for their Portion, and who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his Portion, and was pleased with that Portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that, and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot, and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves, in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8. I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope: 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. 11. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; (Acts ii. 25-28.) and he tells us expressly, that David in them speaks concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections toward God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and a happy state, on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations toward God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy, quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretell the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

I. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, as did many of the Old Testament prophets, who *testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*, (1 Pet. i. 11.) and that is the subject of this prophecy here. It is foretold (as he himself showed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, Luke xxiv. 44, 46.) that *Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here, when he says, (v. 8.) *I shall not be moved*; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he says, "*My flesh shall rest*," it is implied, that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body, so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption; that he should not only die, but he

buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power, in suffering and dying. (1.) That he should not be moved, not driven off, from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail, nor be discouraged, (Isa. xlii. 4.) but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, *It is finished*. Though the service was hard, and the encounter hot, and he trod the wine-press alone, yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, Isa. l. 7-9. *Here am I, let these go their way*. Nay, (2.) That his heart should rejoice, and his glory be glad; that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction; witness that saying, (John xvii. 11.) *Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee*; and that, (John xviii. 11.) *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* and many the like. By his glory is meant his tongue, as appears, Acts ii. 26. For our tongue is our glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in glorifying God.

Now there were three things which bore him up, and carried him on thus cheerfully. [1.] The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did; *I have set the Lord always before me*. He still had an eye to his Father's commandment, (John x. 18.—xiv. 31.) the will of him that sent him. He aimed at his Father's honour, and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father. [2.] The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings; *He is at my right hand*; a present Help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need. *He is near that justifieth me*; (Isa. l. 8.) he is at my right hand, to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, lxxxix. 21. When he was in his agony, an angel was sent from heaven, to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43. To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing; it was the Lord at his right hand, that *struck through kings*, cx. 5. Isa. xlii. 1, 2. [3.] The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was *for the joy set before him*, that he *endured the cross*, Heb. xii. 2. He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, Isa. xi. 10. He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straightway glorified. See John xiii. 31, 32.

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection. (1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should, in a little time, return and be re-united to it, never to part again. (2.) That, being God's Holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption, and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption, nor feel it. This implies, that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon, that his dead body should not so much as begin to corrupt, which, in the course of nature, it would have done, if it had not been raised the third day. We, who have so much corruption in our souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt; (Job xxiv. 19.) but that Holy One of God, who knew no sin, saw no corruption. Under the law, it was strictly ordered, that those parts of the sacrifices, which were not burnt upon the altar, should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrify, (Lev. vii. 15, 18.) which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption—neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed

for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, v. 11. He was well-assured, (1.) That he should not miss of his glory; "Thou wilt show me the path of life, and lead me to that life through this darksome valley." In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*; and, a little before, *Father, glorify me with thine own self*. (2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence, would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand, the recompense of it. (3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, Isa. liii. 10, 11.

II. Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and, in singing them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom, to our everlasting comfort, they have had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our Chief Good and Highest End, our Owner, Ruler, and Judge, our gracious Benefactor, our sure Guide and strict Observer; and, while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did abide him, he could bravely say, *None of these things move me*, Acts xx. 24.

2. That, if our eyes be ever toward God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body, in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection; *My flesh also shall rest in hope*. Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, Isa. lvii. 2. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; we may put off the body in that hope. *Death destroys the hope of man*, (Job xiv. 19.) but not the hope of a good Christian, Prov. xiv. 32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments, hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave, but, though it sees corruption for a time, it shall, at the end of the time, be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours, if we be his.

4. That those who live piously, with God in their eye, may die comfortably, with heaven in their eye. In this world, sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; all our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy; our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them, that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls, in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

PSALM XVII.

David, being in great distress and danger by the malice of his enemies, does, in this psalm, by prayer address himself to God, his tried Refuge, and seeks shelter in him. I. He appeals to God concerning his integrity, v. 1-4

II. He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity, and preserved from the malice of his enemies, v. 5-8, 13. III. He gives a character of his enemies, using that as a plea with God for his preservation, v. 9-12, 14. IV. He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, v. 15. Some make him, in this, a type of Christ, who was perfectly innocent, and yet was hated and persecuted; but, like David, committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

A Prayer of David.

I. **H**EAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips. 2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. 3. Thou hast proved my heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing: I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress. 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me* from the paths of the destroyer. 5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not. 6. I have called upon thee; for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech. 7. Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*.

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise, and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably, by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both urged him as a suppliant to the throne of mercy.

He addresses himself to God in these verses, both by way of appeal, (*Hear the right, O Lord*; let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it,) and, by way of petition, (*Give ear unto my prayer*, (v. 1.) and again, (v. 6.) *Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech*; not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desire of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God, for audience, 1. That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayer; *it goeth not out of feigned lips*. He meant as he spake, and the feelings of his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless; but if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour. 2. That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty; *"I have called upon thee formerly, (v. 6.) therefore, Lord, hear me now."* It will be a great comfort to us, if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a-going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. 3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayer; *"I know thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, incline thine ear to me."* Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires toward him. Let us now see,

I. What his appeal is; and there observe,

1. What the court is, to the cognizance and determination of which he makes his appeal; it is the court of heaven. "Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, he will not hear it. Lord, *let my sentence come forth from thy presence*, v. 2. Men sentence me to be pursued and cut off as an evil-doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee." This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face, (1 Sam. xxiv. 12.) *The Lord judge between me and thee*; and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note, (1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment are a very great support to injured innocency. If we are blackened, and abused, and misrepresented, by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the Patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which, every person and every cause will appear in a true light, stript of all false colours, and by the decisions of which, all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. (2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no not that of God himself, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. *Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal*. God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright, as it is the terror of the hypocrites; and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely accused, and in any wise have wrong done them.

2. What the evidence is, by which he hopes to make good his appeal; it is the trial God had made of him, (v. 3.) *Thou hast proved mine heart*. God's sentence is *therefore* right, because he always proceeds upon his knowledge, which is more certain and infallible than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest searches. He knew God had tried him, (1.) By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he *communed with his own heart upon his bed*. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss, but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. (2.) By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had, once and again, to kill Saul; he had tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him; so that, if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but, upon all these trials, there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him.

God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but, for the further proof of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things, concerning which his conscience bare him record. [1.] That he had fixed a resolution against all sins of the tongue; *"I am purposed and fully determined, in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress."* He does not say, *"I hope that it will not,"* or, *"I wish that it may not,"* but, *"I am fully purposed that it shall not:"* with this bridle he kept his mouth, xxxix. 1. Note, Constant resolution and watchfulness against sins of the tongue, will be a good evidence of our integrity; *If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*, Jam. iii. 2. He does not say, *"My mouth never shall transgress,"* (for in many things we all offend,) but, *"I am purposed that it shall not;"* and he that searches the heart, knows whether the purpose be sincere. [2.] That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions, as from sinful words; (v. 4.) *"Concerning the common works of men, the actions and affairs of hu-*

man life, I have, by the direction of thy word, *kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*" Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, *Destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. But it may be taken more generally; he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. Note, *First*, The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, of the Devil, whose name is *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, a destroyer, who ruins souls by deceiving them into the paths of sin. *Secondly*, It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. *Thirdly*, It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing its directions and admonitions, cxix. 9. *Fourthly*, If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we *keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not* with his temptations, (1 John v. 18.) we may hope he shall not be able to touch us with his terrors.

II. What his petition is; it is, in short, this, That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of, and qualification for, the good will of God toward him: this is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him; (v. 5.) "*Hold up my goings in thy paths.*" Lord, I have, by thy grace, kept me from the paths of the destroyer; by the same grace, let me be kept in thy paths; let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them, nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble, and fall into sin, that I may not trifle, and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still." Those that are, through grace, going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he does not think that that would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, "Lord, still hold me up." Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God, must, by faith and prayer, fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be; that there were those who watched for his halting, and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, "Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not; that I may never say or do any thing that looks either dishonest, or distrustful of thee, and thy providence, and promise."

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, v. 7. Observe here, (1.) How he eyes God, as the Protector and Saviour of his people, so he calls him, and thence he takes his encouragement in prayer; *O thou that savest by thy right hand* (by thine own power, and needest not the agency of any other) *them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.* It is the character of God's people, that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their Trust, for to him they commit themselves. Those that trust in God, have many enemies, many that rise up against them, and seek their ruin; but they have one

Friend that is able to deal with them all, and if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their Saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, *O thou that savest them which trust in thee, from those that rise up against thy right hand.* Those that are enemies to the saints, are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will, in due time, appear against them. (2.) What he expects and desires from God; *Show thy marvellous loving-kindness.* The word signifies, [1.] Distinguishing favours. "Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me, put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou usest to do to those who love thy name." [2.] Wonderfull favours. "O make thy loving-kindness admirable; Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way, that I and others may wonder at it." God's loving-kindness is marvellous, for the freeness and fulness of it; in some instances, it appears, in a special manner, marvellous, (cxviii. 23.) and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

3. Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9. From the wicked that oppress me, *from my deadly enemies who compass me about.* 10. They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11. They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is thy sword*: 14. From men *which are thy hand*, O LORD, from men of the world, *which have their portion in this life*, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure*: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes. 15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

We may observe, in these verses,

I. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safe, through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed. This prayer is both a prediction of the preservation of Christ, through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.* He prays,

1. That he himself might be protected; (v. 8.) "Keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin." Those who put themselves under God's protection, may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him, (1.) With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye with, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's

law as the *apple of our eye*, (Prov. vii. 2.) we may expect that God will so keep us; for it is said concerning his people, that whoso *touches them, touches the apple of his eye*, Zech. ii. 8. (2.) With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings with; Christ uses the similitude, Matth. xxiii. 37. "*Hide me under the shadow of thy wings*, where I may be both safe and warm." Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat; "Let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel." What David here prays for, was performed to the Son of David our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, (Isa. xlix. 2.) that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver. David further prays, "Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world." [1.] "From being, and doing, like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties." [2.] "From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me, let them not triumph over me."

2. That all the designs of his enemies, to bring him either into sin or into trouble, might be defeated; (v. 13.) "*Arise, O Lord, appear for me, disappoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment.*" While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, then when he thought he had him sure! And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!

II. What he pleads, for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies; "They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men they are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down." (1.) "They are very spiteful and malicious; they are my deadly enemies, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood; *enemies against the soul*, so the word is. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God, they bade him *go serve other gods*; (1 Sam. xxvi. 19.) and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. (2.) "They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, v. 10. They are inclosed in their own fat, wrap themselves, hug themselves, in their own honour, and power; and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, lxxiii. 7. Job xv. 27. They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorifying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them." See Rev. xiii. 5, 6. "Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them?" (3.) "They are restless and unwearied in their attempts against me; they compass me about, v. 9. They have now in a manner gained their point, they have surrounded us, they have compassed us in our steps, they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the hound does the hare, and take all advantages against us, being both too many, and too quick, for us. And yet they pretend to look another way, and set their eyes bowing down to the earth, as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else;" or, (as some think,) "They are watchful

and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design." (4.) The ring leader of them, (that was Saul,) is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic, and projecting, (v. 12.) like a lion that lives by prey, and is therefore greedy of it. It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief, as it is of a good man to do good. He is like a young lion lurking in secret places, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David on the rocks of the wild goats, (1 Sam. xxiv. 2.) and in the wilderness of Ziph, (ch. xxvi. 2.) where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God had over them, to control and restrain them. He pleads, (1.) "Lord, they are thy sword; and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children?" As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble, (it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit,) so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleases, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. (2.) "They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel thy displeasure." He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came. *Una eademque manus vulnus opening tulit—The same hand wounds and heals.* There is no flying from God's hand, but by flying to it. It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, and in subjection to, the power of God; see Isa. x. 6, 7, 15.

3. Their outward prosperity; (v. 14.) "Lord, appear against them, for, (1.) "They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are men of the world, actuated by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it, making them their business, and at ease in the enjoyments of it, making them their bliss. They have their portion in this life; they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose them accordingly, place their felicity in them, and aim at them as their chief good; they rest satisfied with them, their souls take ease in them, and they look no further, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, (Luke vi. 24.) *their good things*, (Luke xvi. 25.) *their reward*, (Matth. xx. 13.) "Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those who honour thee by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion?" xvi. 5. (2.) They have abundance of the world, [1.] They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them; *their bellies thou fillest with hid treasures.* The things of this world are called *treasures*, because they are so accounted; otherwise, to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash. They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the sovereign disposals of Providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They that fare deliciously every day, have their bellies filled with these hid treasures; and they will but fill the belly, (1 Cor. vi. 13.) they will not fill the soul, they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, Isa. lv. 2.

They are husks, and ashes, and wind; and yet most men, having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them. [2.] They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them. They are full of children, and yet their pasture is not overstocked; they have enough for them all, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes, to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. "Lord," said David, "deliver me from them; let me not have my portion with them. Deliver me from their designs against me; for, they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side."

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his Portion and Happiness. "They have their portion in this life, but as for me, (v. 15.) I am none of them, I have but little of the world; *Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo*—*I neither have, nor need, nor care for*. It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in, that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those who have their portion in this life." Beholding God's face with satisfaction, may be considered, (1.) As our duty and comfort in this world. We must, in righteousness, clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart and a good life, by faith behold God's face, and set him always before us; entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and, when we awake every morning, we must be satisfied with his likeness set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than they have whose belly is filled with the delights of sense. (2.) As our recompense and happiness in the other world; with the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this. That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified: they shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things. [1.] The immediate vision of God and his glory; *I shall behold thy face*; not, as in this world, through a glass darkly; the knowledge of God will there be perfected and the enlarged intellect filled with it. [2.] The participation of his likeness; our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former; (1 John iii. 2.) *When he shall appear, we shall therefore be like him, for we shall see him as he is*. [3.] A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this; *I shall be satisfied*, abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good will towards us, and his good work in us; and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm we met with before in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. xxii. That was the first edition of it, here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him; these he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory, and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry is very fine, the images bold, the expressions lofty, and every word proper and significant; but the piety far exceeds the poetry. Holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. I. He triumphs in God, v. 1. 3. II. He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, v. 4. 19. III. He takes the comfort of his integrity, which God had thereby cleared up,

v. 20. 28. IV. He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, v. 29. 42. V. He encourages himself with the expectation of what God would further do for him and his, v. 43. 50.

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

1. **I** WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. 6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. 7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. 10. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed; hail-stones and coals of fire. 13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. 14. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. 17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 19. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm; we had it before, (2 Sam. xxii. 1.) only here we are told, that the psalm was delivered *To the chief musician*, or precentor, in the temple-songs. Note, The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be service-

able to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called *the servant of the Lord*, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because, with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour, that he was a servant of the Lord, than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it, (cxvi. 16.) *O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* In these verses,

I. He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, *I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength*, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and thus we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires, and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved, is the lover's delight; this string, therefore, he touches, and on this he harps with much pleasure; (v. 2.) "The Lord, Jehovah, is my God;" and then, "He is my Rock, my Fortress, all that I need, and can desire in my present distress." For there is that in God, which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. "He is my Rock, and Strength, and Fortress;" that is, (1.) "I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties." (2.) "I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me." Those that truly love God, may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, v. 3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better; *call upon him as long as we live*, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance, that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*, Acts ii. 21.

II. He sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was, out of which we were delivered, the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls *the floods of Belial*, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers; they surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him, their snares prevented him; and when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, v. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a lost man; see cxvi. 3.

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, v. 6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a praying-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Though distress drives us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance, the greater it is: such were the deliverance wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes

is most magnificently described, v. 7, &c. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances. (1.) He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the *foundations of the hills*, (v. 7.) as of old at mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to *tremble*; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. (2.) He showed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people. He was wroth, v. 7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire, (v. 8.) and coals were kindled by it. Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals, that is, fuel to this fire, will be consumed by it. He that ordains his arrows against the persecutors, sends them forth when he pleases, and they are sure to hit the mark, and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, v. 14. (3.) He showed his readiness to plead his people's cause, and work deliverance for them; for he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, for the maintaining of right and the relieving of his distressed servants, v. 10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him, *who rides upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies*. (4.) He showed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case; *he bowed the heavens and came down*; (v. 9.) did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people. (5.) He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, Isa. xlv. 15. He is a God that hideth himself; for he *made darkness his pavilion*, v. 11. His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret, they are kind; for though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And, *at his brightness, the thick clouds pass*; (v. 12.) comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance, the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, v. 15. There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn, (v. 16.) as Moses, who had his name from being drawn out of the water literally, as David was figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they had been too strong for him, v. 17. And they were too quick for him; for they *prevented him in the day of his calamity*, v. 18. But, in the midst of his troubles, the Lord was his Stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles, in the mean time.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance, was, that his comfort was the fruit of it, and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. (1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, v. 19. "He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had room, not only to turn, but to thrive, in." (2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet; "*He delivered me, because he delighted in me, not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will.*" Compare this with 2 Sam. xv. 26. *If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am.* We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight G

had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well-pleased.

In singing this, we must triumph in God, and trust in him: and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David; the sorrows of death surrounded him, in his distress he prayed, (Heb. v. 7.) God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. 25. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; 26. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. 27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks. 28. For thou wilt light my candle; the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Here,

1. David reflects, with comfort, upon his own integrity, and rejoices in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. i. 12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. (1.) His deliverances cleared his innocence before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls *rewarding him according to his righteousness*, (v. 20, 24.) determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause, and the cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocence; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal, (as he always will,) according to equity. (2.) They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, v. 21-23. His own heart knows, and is ready to attest it, [1.] That he had kept firm to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed, from his God. They that forsake the ways of the Lord do, in effect, depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet, if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed into a departure, for it is not a wicked departure, from our God. [2.] That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands; (v. 22.) "*All his judgments were before me*; and I had a

respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard; but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways." [3.] That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily besets us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us, that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

2. He takes occasion thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, v. 25, 26. (1.) Those that show mercy to others, (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no not of their works of mercy,) shall find mercy with God, Matth. v. 7. (2.) Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God. (3.) Those that serve God with a pure conscience, shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. (4.) Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, Lev. xxvi. 21, 24.

3. Hence he speaks comfort to the humble; "*Thou wilt save the afflicted people*," that are wronged and bear it patiently;" but he speaks terror to the proud; "*Thou wilt bring down high looks*, that aim high, and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious;" and he speaks encouragement to himself; "*Thou wilt light my candle*;" thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles, and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee, and the interests of thy kingdom among men."

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, in singing these verses, encourage themselves, that God himself will be a Light to them.

29. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30. *As for* God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31. For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? 32. *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. 33. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. 34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand

hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 41. They cried, but *there was none* to save *them*: *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not. 42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me. 44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46. The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47. *It is* God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me. 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. 50. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

In these verses,

I. David looks back, with thankfulness, upon the great things which God had done for him; he had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to have triumphed over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy, we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about, and followed, all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. 1. God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to, nor designed for; his genius leading him more to music and poetry, and a contemplative life; *He teaches my hands to war*, v. 34. 2. God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war; *God girded him with strength*, (v. 32, 39.) to that degree, that he could break even a bow of steel, v. 34. What service God designs men for, he will be sure to fit them for. 3. God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies, but to fly upon them; (v. 33.)

He makes my feet like hinds' feet, v. 36. "*Thou hast enlarged my steps under me*; but" (whereas those that take large steps, are apt to tread awry) "*my feet did not slip*." He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, v. 37. 4. God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it; (v. 29.) if ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them; and, by divine assistance, set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, v. 33. 5. God had protected him, and kept him safe, in the midst of the greatest perils; many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved; "*Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation*, (v. 35.) and that has compassed me on every side: by that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people who aimed at my destruction, (v. 43.) particularly from the violent man," (v. 48.) Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. 6. God had prospered and succeeded him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect, (v. 32.) and it was his right hand, that held him up, v. 35. 7. God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, who would have deposed him. He enlarges much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories, not to his own sword or bow, or the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God; I pursued them, (v. 37.) I wounded them, (v. 38.) *for thou hast girded me with strength*, (v. 39.) else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God; *Thou hast subdued them under me*, v. 39. *Thou hast given me their necks*, (v. 40.) not only to trample upon them, (as Josh. x. 24.) but to cut them off. Even those who hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, in their distress, cried unto the Lord, but in vain, he answered them not. How could they expect he should, when it was he whom they fought against? And when he disowned them, (as he will all those that act against his people,) no other succours could stand them in stead; *There was none to save them*, v. 41. Those whom God has abandoned are easily vanquished; *Then did I beat them small as the dust*, v. 42. But those whose cause is just he avenges, (v. 47.) and those whom he favours will certainly be *lifted up above those that rise up against them*, v. 48. 8. God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great; (v. 35.) *Thy gentleness has increased me*: thy discipline and instruction; so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to greatness. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler; *Thou hast made me the head of the heathen*; (v. 43.) all the neighbouring nations were tributaries to him. See 2 Sam. viii. 6, 11. In all this, David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be Head over all things to his church, which is his body.

II. David looks up, with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection; when God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises, to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, v. 46. He gives honour to him, 1. As a living God; *The Lord liveth*, v. 46.

We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself, and is therefore fitly called *the living God*. The gods of the heathen were dead gods; the best friends we have among men are dying friends; but God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their Life. 2. As a finishing God; As for God, he is not only perfect himself, but *his way is perfect*, v. 30. He is known by his name *Jehovah*, (Exod. vi. 3.) a God performing and perfecting what he begins, in providence as well as creation, Gen. ii. 1. If it was God that made David's way perfect, (v. 32.) much more is his own so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he does, Eccl. iii. 14. And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way; what God begins to build, he is able to finish. 3. As a faithful God; *The word of the Lord is tried*. "I have tried it," (says David,) "and it has not failed me." All the saints, in all ages, have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise. 4. As the Protector and Defender of his people. David had found him so to him; "*He is the God of my salvation*, (v. 46.) by whose power and grace I am, and hope to be, saved; but not of mine only; he is a *Buckler to all those that trust in him*; (v. 30.) he shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so." 5. As a non-such in all this; (v. 31.) There is a God, and who is God, save Jehovah? That God is a Rock, for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers; and who is a Rock, save our God? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note, (1.) Whoever pretend to be deities, it is certain that there is no God, save the Lord; all others are counterfeits, Isa. xlv. 8. Jer. x. 10. (2.) Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is no Rock, save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

III. David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promises himself, 1. That his enemies should be completely subdued, and that those of them that yet remained should be made his footstool. That his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him, v. 43. That his conquests, and, consequently, his acquiesces, should be easy; *As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me*, v. 44. And that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that are retired to their fastnesses shall not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be quite put down. 2. That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah, who, he foresaw, should come from his loins, v. 50. He shows mercy to his anointed, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore. *He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his Seed, as of one, that is Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Christ is called *David*, Hos. iii. 5. God has called him *his King*, ii. 6. Great deliverance God does give, and will give, to him, and

to his church and people, here called *his seed for evermore*.

In singing these verses, we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto, and of all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel-kingdom; and encourage our selves and one another with an assurance, that the church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.

PSALM XIX.

There are two excellent books which the great God has published for the instruction and edification of the children of men; this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study. I. The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and Godhead of the Creator, v. 1.-6. II. The book of the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty. He shows the excellency and usefulness of that book, (v. 7.-11.) and then teaches us how to improve it, v. 12.-14.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. 2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3. *There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*. 4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; 5. *Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race*. 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world, the psalmist, in these verses, leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestably evident, and whose glory shines transcendently bright, in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the divine power serves not only to show the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven, and yet say, "There is no God;" who see the effect, and yet say, "There is no cause;" but to show the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination, who, though the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

I. What that is which the creatures notify to us: they are many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by showing his handy-works, v. 1. They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy-works; for they could not exist from eternity, all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with: therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an Eternal Mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the *work of his fingers*, (viii. 3.) and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work, we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great Author. From the brightness of the heavens, we may collect that the Creator is Light; their vastness of

extent bespeaks his immensity; their height his transcendency and sovereignty; their influence upon this earth, his dominion and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day, according to the ordinances that were then settled.

II. What are some of those things which notify this?

1. The heavens and the firmament: the vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets, and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that, whereas they are made to look downward, as their spirits must go, he is made erect, to look upward, because upward his spirit must shortly go, and his thoughts should now rise.

2. The constant and regular succession of day and night; (*v.* 2.) *Day unto day, and night unto night*, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah, (*Gen.* viii. 22.) that, *while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease*; to which covenant of providence, the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, (*Jer.* xxxiii. 20.—xxxi. 35. The counterchanging of day and night, in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe, that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, *he forms the light, and creates the darkness*, (*Isa.* xlv. 7.) and sets the one over-against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for he *makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice*, *lxv.* 8. He not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us, by this constant revolution; for, as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; every day and every night speak the goodness of God, and when they have finished their testimony, leave it to the next day, to the next night, to say the same.

3. The light and influence of the sun, do, in a special manner, declare the glory of God; for, of all the heavenly bodies, that is the most conspicuous in itself, and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun, observe here, (1.) The place appointed him: in the heavens God has set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies are called *hosts of heaven*, and therefore are fitly said to *dwell in tents*, as soldiers in their encampments: the sun is said to have a *tabernacle* set him, not only because he is in continual motion, and never has a fixed residence, but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the sun shall be turned into darkness. (2.) The course assigned him: that glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least, as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit thence to the opposite point, and thence (to complete his diurnal revolution) to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy, that we can certainly foretell the hour and the minute at which the sun will rise at such a place, any day to come. (3.) The brightness wherein he appears: he is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, richly dressed up and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself, and making all about him pleasant; *for the friend of the bridegroom rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice*, John

iii. 29. (4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour: though it seems a vast round which he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet, in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only does it, but does it with a great deal of pleasure, and *rejoices as a strong man to run a race*. With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do. (5.) His universal influence on this earth: there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, nor the metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

III. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God; it is made to all parts of the world; (*v.* 3, 4.) *There is no speech nor language*, (no nation, for the nations were divided *after their tongues*, *Gen.* x. 31, 32.) where their voice is not heard. *Their line is gone through all the earth*, (the equinoctial line suppose,) and with it, *their words to the end of the world*, proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, *v.* 4. The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them, (*Rom.* x. 18.) so that they were without excuse, if they were idolaters, *Rom.* i. 20, 21. And those were without blame, who, by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. They have no speech or language, (so some read it,) and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them, in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

In singing these verses, we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

7. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple: 8. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes: 9. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. 12. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. 13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. 14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

God's glory, that is, his goodness to man, appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expect-

tation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served, if man had retained his integrity; but, to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

I. The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences, (v. 7-9.) in each of which the name *Jehovah* is repeated; and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the Law-Maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts, and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it, which prove its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever; and here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

1. *The law of the Lord is perfect*; it is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; it will make the man of God perfect, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

2. *The testimony of the Lord* (which witnesses for him to us) *is sure*, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It will give us an insight into things divine, and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work, and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple, poor contrivers as they may be for the present world, wise for their souls and eternity. Those that are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly, and willing to be taught, those shall be made wise by the word of God, xxv. 9.

3. *The statutes of the Lord* (enacted by his authority, and binding on all wherever they come) *are right*, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man, and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right, (cxix. 128.) just as they should be; and they will set us to rights, if we receive them, and submit to them; and, because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

4. *The commandment of the Lord is pure*; it is clear without darkness, it is clean, without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

5. *The fear of the Lord* (true religion and godliness, prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life) *is clean*, clean itself, and will make us clean; (John xv. 3.) it will cleanse our way, cxix. 9. And it endureth for ever; it is of perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed;

the ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

6. *The judgments of the Lord* (all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom) *are true*; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are *righteous*, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so *altogether*, there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

II. He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have, from it, v. 10, 11.

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God; it is the character of all good people, that they prefer their religion and the word of God, (1.) Far before all the wealth of the world; it is more desirable than *gold*, than *fine gold*, than *much fine gold*. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. (2.) Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word; *By them is thy servant warned*. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, Ezek. iii. 17.—xxxiii. 7. It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantage he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts; *In keeping of them there is great reward*. Those who make conscience of their duty, will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only *after* keeping, but *in* keeping, God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour, it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet, and our crosses easy, life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

III. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. "Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? Then *who can understand his errors?* I cannot, whoever can." From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his errors; if the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle; it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, and strictness, and spiritual nature, of the divine law, he learns that his sins are so many, that he cannot understand the number of them, and so exceeding sinful, that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins, which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of: many we have been guilty of, which

we have forgotten; so that when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin, we must conclude with an *et cætera—and such like*: for God knows a great deal more evil of us, than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion hence to pray against sin; all the discoveries of sin made us by the law, should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here,

(1.) For mercy to pardon; finding himself unable to specify all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, *Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults*; not secret to God, so none are, nor only such as are secret to the world, but such as were hid from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt, and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1 John, i. 7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need; having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, v. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here. Where observe, [1.] His petition; "Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God, and wound conscience, which wither our comforts, and shock our hopes. "However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be enslaved by it." [2.] His plea; "So shall I be upright; I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression;" so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Numb. xv. 28-30. Note, *First*, Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous: those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. *Secondly*, Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear. *Thirdly*, Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forward toward a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation, or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, v. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before. He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, lxvi. 18. Observe, (1.) What his services were; the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory, and the edification of others; and the words of our

mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, xlv. 1. (2.) What was his care concerning these services; that they might be acceptable with God—else what do they avail us? Gracious souls must have all they aim at, if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss. (3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this; because God was his Strength and his Redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our Strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this, we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God, and delivered into it; we should be much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and we should fetch in help from heaven against it.

PSALM XX.

It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, should be made, in a special manner, for kings, and all in authority. This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving, for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or, in general, as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm, we may observe, I. What it is they beg of God for the king, v. 1-4. II. With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph; (v. 5.) The prince; (v. 6.) Both together; (v. 7, 8.) and so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience, v. 9. In this, David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom, and its interests among men, the church was, in every age, a hearty well-wisher.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. 2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. 3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifice. Selah. 4. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. 5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

This prayer for David is entitled, a *psalm of David*; nor was it any absurdity at all for him, who was divinely inspired, to draw up a directory, or form of prayer, to be used in the congregation for himself, and those in authority under him; nay, it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends, to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know well how to pray for themselves, must not despise, but earnestly desire, the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates, and those in power, ought to esteem praying people, and encourage them to reckon them their strength, (Zech. xii. 5, 10.) and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers, and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

I. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

1. That God would answer his prayers; *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble*, (v. 1.) and *the Lord fulfil all thy petitions*, v. 5. Note, (1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself,

of disappointment and distress, of treading down, and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head, nor the grace in his heart, would exempt him from trouble. (2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, was constant to his devotions; though he had prophets, and priests, and many good people, among his subjects, to pray for him, he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers, or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede, but to second, our own for ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, *Amen*.

2. That God would protect his person, and preserve his life, in the perils of war; "*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee*, and set thee out of the reach of thine enemies." (1.) "Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble." David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God. (2.) "Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil;" (Prov. xviii. 10.) "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, into which the righteous run by faith, and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time.

3. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good; that, in the day of battle, he would *send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion*, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant, and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him, in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers, made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is it we should most desire, both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

4. That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on this dangerous expedition; *The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifices*, (v. 3.) or turn them to ashes; that is, "The Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice, as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven." By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

5. That God would crown all his enterprises and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success; (v. 4.) *The Lord grant thee according to thine own heart*. This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God, may expect that God will, one way or other, gratify them; and they who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil their's; *Thou shalt devise a thing, and it shall be established unto thee*.

II. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good king; (v. 5.) "*We will rejoice in thy salvation*. We, that are subjects, will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince;" or rather, "In thy salvation, O God, in thy power and

promise to save, will we rejoice, that is it which we depend upon now, and which, in the issue, we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in." Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord, shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation; *In the name of our God will we set up our banners*. 1. "We will wage war in his name, we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his direction, implore his aid, and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him." David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. (2.) "We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him."

In singing this, we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under, and to the prosperity of it. But we may look further; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David, and in him they were abundantly answered; he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness; in the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, the Lord heard him in that he feared; (Heb. v. 7.) *sent him help out of the sanctuary*, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes; the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner, fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well-pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul, to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for, him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.

6. Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed: he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. 7. Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. 8. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright. 9. Save, LORD: let the King hear us when we call.

Here is,

I. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people; (v. 6.) "*Now know I* (I, that pen the psalm, know it) *that the Lord saveth his anointed*, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him." Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. Now that so many, who have an interest in heaven, are praying for him, he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace; which will, 1. Take its rise from above; he will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type, (Heb. ix. 23.) from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type. 2. It shall take its effect here below. *He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand*; he will give a real answer to his prayers, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, or by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the

saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear that he hears him, by what he does for him.

II. His people triumphing in God and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. 1. See the difference between worldly people and godly people, in their confidences, *v.* 7. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well, if those do but smile upon them; they trust in chariots and in horses, and the more of them they can bring into the field, the more sure they are of success in their wars; probably, David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, 2 Sam. viii. 4.—x. 18. "But," say the Israelites, "we neither have chariots and horses to trust to, nor do we want them, nor, if we had them, would we build our hopes of success upon that; but we will remember, and rely upon, the name of the Lord our God, upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God, and the knowledge we have of him by his name," that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. 2. See the difference in the issue of their confidences, and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice; things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence, and who not, *v.* 8. "They that trust in their chariots and horses, are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them, that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, 2 Sam. viii. 4. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God, not only stand upright, and keep our ground, but are risen, and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them." Note, A believing obedient trust in God, and his name, is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead, when creature-confidences fail those that depend upon them.

III. They conclude their prayer for the king with a *Hosanna*, "*Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord!*" *v.* 9. As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, "Save, Lord, give him success;" but that he would make him a blessing to them, "Let the king hear us, when we call to him for justice and mercy." Those that would have good of their magistrates, must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us, (and no more,) that God makes them to be. Or, it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us, according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, *Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call;* and so it is a summary of the whole psalm, and is taken into our English Liturgy. *O Lord, save the king, and mercifully hear us, when we call upon thee.*

In singing these verses, we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that, under them, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

PSALM XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving

for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for, we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings, in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, 1. To congratulate him on his victories, and the honour he had achieved, *v.* 1.—6. 11. To confide in the power of God for the completing of the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, *v.* 7.—13. In this, there is an eye to the Messiah, the Prince, and the Glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable than to David himself.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! 2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5. His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. 6. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength, and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained; and all, with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness David's victories were but shadows.

1. They here congratulate the king on his joys, and concur with him in them; (*v.* 1.) "The king rejoices, he uses to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we; what pleases the king, pleases us," 2 Sam. iii. 36. Happy the people, the character of whose king it is, that he makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to bear him out in all he does for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus, in his great undertaking, relied upon help from Heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

2. They give God all the praise of those things, which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

(1.) That God had heard his prayers; (*v.* 2.) *Thou hast given him his heart's desire,* (and there is no prayer accepted, but what is the heart's desire,) the very thing they begged of God for him, *xx.* 4. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do, in a special manner, require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

(2.) That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations; (*v.* 3.) *Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.* All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing, not at all to any merit of ours, but purely, and only, to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it, in a special manner, obliging, that these blessings were given in a preventing way; this fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresses it. When God's blessings come sooner, and prove richer, than we imagine, when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary; then it may be truly said, that he prevented us with them. Nothing, indeed, prevented

Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

(3.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour, and the most extensive power; "*Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head, and kept it there, when his enemies attempted to throw it off.*" Note, Crowns are at God's disposal; no head wears them but God sets them there; whether in judgment to his land, or for mercy, the event will show. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

(4.) That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think; (v. 4.) "When he went forth upon a perilous expedition, he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever; didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah that should come of his loins." See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer thence, how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also, and rejoice in, the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and *of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*; and because he thus lives, we shall thus live also.

(5.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity; (v. 5.) "*His glory is great, far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, in the salvation thou hast wrought for him and by him.*" The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is, to see the salvation of the Lord; *honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burden which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for.* Jesus Christ *received from God the Father honour and glory*, (2 Pet. i. 17.) the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, John xvii. 5. And on him is laid the charge of universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

(6.) That God had given him the satisfaction of being the channel of all bliss to mankind; (v. 6.) "*Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever,*" (so the margin reads,) "thou hast made him to be a universal, everlasting, blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are, and shall be, blessed; and so thou hast made him exceeding glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it." See how the spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none besides is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever to that eminency that the expression denotes: and of him it is said, that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

In singing this, we should rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his exaltation.

7. For the king trusteth in the Lord; and, through the mercy of the Most High, he shall not be moved. 8. Thy hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. 10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11. For they intended

evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device, *which they are not able to perform*: 12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, *when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.* 13. Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: *so will we sing and praise thy power.*

The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them; *The king rejoices in God*, (v. 1.) and therefore we will be thankful; *the king trusteth in God*, (v. 7.) therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our King, is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

1. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom; *Through the mercy of the Most High*, and not through his own merit or strength, *he shall not be moved.* His prosperous state shall not be disturbed, his faith and hope in God, who is the Stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the Most High, the divine goodness, power and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his sufferings, (xvi. 8.) and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot, be moved, but continues ever.

2. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent, implacable, enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto, was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about; and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe, (1.) The description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, v. 8. They hated David, because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ, because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, John xv. 23, 25. (2.) The designs of his enemies; (v. 11.) *They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device*; they pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity was against God himself. They that aimed to un-king David, aimed, in effect, to un-God Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raises up to support and advance it, is a very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. (3.) The disappointment of them; "They devise what they are not able to perform," v. 11. Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing, ii. 1. (4.) The discovery of them; (v. 8.) "*Thy hand shall find them out*, though ever so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship; though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom, and hardly to be distinguished from them; though flying from justice, and absconding in their close places; yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are." There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last, than fig-leaves were at first. (5.) The destruction of them; it will be an utter destruction, (Luke xix. 27.) they shall be swallowed up and devoured, v. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. *Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed*, v. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will

at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them, (v. 12.) That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them; (v. 9.) they shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire, (Matth. xiii. 42.) but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace; they shall be their own tormentors, the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him and fought against him, shall find that even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them, to eternity, a fiery oven to themselves: it is the worm that dies not.

3. In this confidence, they beg of God that he would still appear for his anointed, (v. 13.) that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts, and Father of spirits, making little use of means and instruments. And, (1.) Hereby he could exalt himself, and glorify his own name. "We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord, take the work into thine own hands, do it without us, and it will be thy glory." (2.) Hereupon they would exalt him; "So will we sing, and praise thy power, the more triumphantly." The less God has of our service when a deliverance is in the working, the more he must have of our praises when it is wrought without us.

PSALM XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where else in all the Old Testament, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; (1 Pet. i. 11.) of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary, that we may suppose there were some wise and good men, who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy, far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself, that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm, he speaks, I. Of the humiliation of Christ; (v. 1.-21.) where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in, upon many accounts. 1. He complains, and mixes comforts with his complaints; complains, v. 1, 2, but comforts himself, v. 3.-5. complains again, v. 6.-8. but comforts himself again, v. 9, 10. 2. He complains, and mixes prayers with his complaints; complains of the power and rage of his enemies; (v. 12, 13, 16, 18.) of his own bodily weakness and decay, v. 14, 15, 17. But prays that God would not be far from him, v. 11, 19. That he would save and deliver him, v. 19.-21. II. Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God, (v. 22.-25.) for the salvation and joy of his people, (v. 26.-29.) and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, v. 30, 31. In singing this psalm, we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings, as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace, as to experience the power and influence of it.

To the chief musician upon Ajeleth Shahar.
A psalm of David.

1. **MY** God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? 2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, yet thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. 3. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8. He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 9. But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of the psalm upon Ajeleth Shahar—The hind of the morning; Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices, (Cant. viii. 14.) as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, to all believers; (Prov. v. 19.) he giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a hind let loose, Gen. xlix. 21. He is the Hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, v. 16. But others think it denotes only the tune to which the Psalm was set.

In these verses, we have,

I. A sad complaint of God's withdrawals, v. 1, 2. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, pressed with the burthen of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, crying earnestly for relief, and, in this case, apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him, again and again, "My God," and continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, 1. Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts! 2. Even their complaint of these burthens is a good sign of spiritual life, and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, "My God, why am I sick? why am I poor?" would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. 3. When we are lamenting God's withdrawals, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence; "However it be, yet God is good, and he is mine; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me immediately, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent."

But it must be applied to Christ; for, in the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross; (Matth. xxvii. 46.) probably he proceeded to the following words, and, some think, repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud, (because they cavilled at the first words,) yet to himself. Note, (1.) Christ, in his sufferings, cried earnestly to his Father, for his favour and presence with him; he cried in the day-time upon the cross, and in the night-season when he was in his agony in the garden; he offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, Heb. v. 7. (2.) Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and this was it which he complains of

more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give insensible comforts; but Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereunto, the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief*; Isa. liii. 10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

II. Encouragement taken, in reference hereunto, v. 3-5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him, yet, 1. He will think well of God; "*But thou art holy*, not unjust, untrue, or unkind, in any of thy dispensations; though thou dost not immediately come in to the relief of thine afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, Hab. i. 13. And as thou art infinitely pure and upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thine upright people; *Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel*, thou art pleased to manifest thy glory, and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary where they attend thee with their praises; there thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting hast said, *This is my rest for ever*." This bespeaks Christ's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers—that, though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel. And it may comfort us in all our complaints—that, though God seem, for a while, to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so pleased with his people's praises, that he will, in due time, give them cause to change their note; *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him*. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel, notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. 2. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer; (v. 4, 5.) "*Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them*; therefore thou wilt, in due time, deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee, sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself, and the same to thy people, that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake," Rom. xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this—that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were, in due time, delivered, and were types of his exaltation too; therefore he knew *he also should not be confounded*, Isa. i. 7.

III. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is, the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawals; but as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, v. 6-8. Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day, first or last, appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm, and no man. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downward, that is, and will be, the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was *Adam—a mean man*, and *Enosh—a man of sorrows*, but *to, Ish—not a considerable man*; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and *his visage was marred*

more than any man's, Isa. lii. 14. Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became a worm, and no man. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dying scarlet or purple; whence some make it as an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him; 1. He was reproached as a bad man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Cæsar, a confederate with the prince of the devils. 2. He was despised of the people, as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of; his country in no repute, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers, or the Pharisees, but the mob. 3. He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too. They that saw him hanging on the cross laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions, with all the gestures and expressions of insolence, upbraiding him with his fall; they make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest of his sufferings; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, This was he that said he *trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him*. David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ this was literally and exactly fulfilled; those very gestures were used by those that reviled him; (Matth. xxvii. 39.) they wagged their heads, nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves, that they used the very words, (v. 43.) *He trusted in God, let him deliver him*. Our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the lowest possible instance of ignominy and disgrace.

IV. Encouragement taken as to this also; (v. 9, 10.) Men despise me; *but thou art he that took me out of the womb*. David and other good men have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this, that God was not only the *God of their fathers*, as before, (v. 4.) but the God of their infancy, who began by times to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore they hope, will never cast them off. He that did so well for us in that helpless, useless, state, will not leave us, when he has reared us and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us, 1. In the birth; *He took us also out of the womb*, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence, as time, in general, began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being. 2. At the breast; "*Then didst thou make me hope*," that is, "thou didst that for me, in providing sustenance for me, and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days." The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are earnest of the blessings of our whole lives; surely he that fed us then, will never starve us, Job iii. 12. 3. In our early dedication to him; *I was cast upon thee from the womb*. Which perhaps refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant; for circumcision was a seal of the covenant; and this encouraged him to trust in God. These have reason to think themselves safe, who were so soon, so solemnly, *gathered under the wings of the divine majesty*. 4. In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant, uninterrupted, series of preservations and supplies; *Thou art my God*; providing for me, and watching over me for good, *from my mother's belly*

from my coming into the world, unto this day. And if, as soon as we became capable of exercising reason, we put our confidence in God, and committed ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the *kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals*, Jer. ii. 2. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the Divine Providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt; *when he was a child, God loved him, and called him thence*, (Hos. xi. 1.) and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings; men reproached him, and discouraged his confidence in God; but God had honoured him, and encouraged his confidence in him.

11. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for *there is none to help*. 12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me *with their mouths, as* a ravening and a roaring lion. 14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17. I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me. 18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In these verses, we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying; by which we are directed to look for crosses, and to look up to God under them.

1. Here is Christ suffering: David indeed was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here specified are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depths of his humiliation.

1. He is here deserted by his friends; trouble and distress are near, and there is none to help, none to uphold, v. 11. He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him, and fled. It is God's honour to help, when all other helps and succours fail.

2. He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of a higher rank, who, for their strength and fury, are compared to *bulls, strong bulls of Bashan*, (v. 12.) fat and fed to the full, haughty and sour; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs, (v. 16.) filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down. There is an assembly of the wicked plotting against him; (v. 16.) for the chief priests sat in council, to consult of ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous; "Many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seem to have gained their point, for they have

beset me round, v. 12. They have enclosed me, v. 16. They are formidable, and threatening: (v. 13.) *They gaped upon me with their mouths*, to show me that they would swallow me up; and this, with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey."

3. He is here crucified; the very manner of his death is described, though never in use among the Jews; *They pierced my hands and my feet*, (v. 16.) which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage, in all the Old Testament, which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled.

4. He is here dying, (v. 14, 15.) dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, (1.) The dissolution of the whole frame of his body; *I am poured out like water*, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature. (2.) The dislocation of his bones; care was taken that not one of them should be broken, (John xix. 36.) but they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross as upon a rack. Or it may denote the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed; the effect of which perhaps was, (as sometimes it has been of great fear, Dan. v. 6.) that the *joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another*. His bones were put out of joint, that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice. (3.) The colliquation of his spirits; *My heart is like wax*, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the sins he undertook to satisfy for; melting away like the vitals of a dying man; as this satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble, he says, *The Almighty makes my heart soft*; (Job xxiii. 16.) and see Ps. lxxviii. 2. (4.) The failing of his natural force; *My strength is dried up*; so that he became parched and brittle like a potsherd, the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? or who knows the power of it? *If this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (5.) The clamminess of his mouth, a usual symptom of approaching death; *My tongue cleaveth to my jaws*; this was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross, (John xix. 28.) and in his silence under his sufferings; for, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, nor objected against any thing done to him. (6.) His giving up the ghost; *"Thou hast brought me to the dust of death"*; I am just ready to drop into the grave;" for nothing less would satisfy divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the Sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed: *Unto dust thou shalt return*. And therefore Christ, having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here uses a like expression; *Thou hast brought me to the dust of death*.

He was stripped; the shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told, (1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped; *I may tell all my bones*, v. 17. His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and

fasting, during the whole course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was near 50 years old, when he was yet but 33; as we find, John viii. 57. His wrinkles now witnessed for him that he was far from being what he was called, *a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber*. Or, his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs. *They look and stare upon me; i. e. my bones do, being distorted, and having no flesh to cover them*, as Job says; (*ch. xvi. 8.*) *My leanness, rising up in me, beareth witness to my face*. Or, "The standers by, the passers by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus; and, instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle." (2.) What they did with his clothes, which they took from him; (*v. 18.*) *They part my garments among them*, to every soldier a part, and *upon my vesture, the seamless coat, do they cast lots*. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, John xix. 23, 24. And though it was no great instance of Christ's suffering, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the scripture in him. Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let this, therefore, confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him as the best of friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us.

II. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burthen of his sufferings; Christ, in his agony, prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him; when the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, *gaped upon him as a roaring lion*, he fell upon the ground, and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his *Strength*, *v. 19*. When we cannot rejoice in God as our Song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our Strength; and take the comfort of spiritual supports, when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays, 1. That God would be with him, and not set himself at a distance from him; *Be not thou far from me*, (*v. 11.*) and again, *v. 19*. "Whoever stands aloof from my sore, Lord, do not thou." The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God, and then we may hope that he will draw near to us. 2. That he would help him, and make haste to help him; help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking, nor sink under it. And the Father *heard him in that he feared*, (*Heb. v. 7.*) and enabled him to go through with his work. 3. That he would deliver him, and save him, *v. 20, 21*. (1.) Observe what the jewel is which he is in care for, "The safety of my soul, my darling, let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, (*xlix. 15.*) Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safe to paradise." The psalmist here calls his soul his *darling*, his *only one*, so the word is; "*My soul is my only one*. I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it; and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one, it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling, unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it, and to provide all necessaries for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare." (2.) Observe what the danger is from which he prays to be delivered, from the sword, the flaming sword of divine wrath, which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, *Gen. iii. 24*. God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands; "O deliver my soul from that. Lord, though I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth." This seems to

be meant of Satan, that old enemy who bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom he was to engage in close combat, and whom he saw coming, *John xiv. 30*. "Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors." He pleads, "Thou hast formerly *heard me from the horns of the unicorn*," that is, "saved me from him, in answer to my prayer." This may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations, (*Matth. iv.*) when the Devil left him for a season, (*Luke iv. 13.*) but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. "Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and *cast out the prince of this world*." Has God delivered us *from the horns of the unicorn*, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered, doth, and will. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but, the third day, raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him than if he had helped him down from the cross; for that would have hindered his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this, we should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him: all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. 25. My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. 27. All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD; and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee. 28. For the kingdom *is* the LORD's; and he *is* the governor among the nations. 29. All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him and none can keep alive his own soul. 30. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation. 31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, (*Heb. ii. 12.*) and are made his own words; *I will declare thy name unto my bre-*

thren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him, not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul, and was well satisfied: witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last; *It is finished.*

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings.

I. That he should have a church in the world, and that those that were given him from eternity should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should *see his seed*, Isa. liii. 10. It pleased him to think, 1. That by the declaring of God's name, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him, and to God by him. And, for this end, ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, who should be so much his messengers and his voice, that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. 2. That those who are thus called in, should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased, to call them so; not the believing Jews only, his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also, who became fellow-heirs, and of the same body, Heb. ii. 11. Christ is our elder Brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be toward him, and that we should be willing that he should rule over us. 3. That these his brethren should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation; such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, into which all the *children of God that were scattered abroad, are collected*, and in which they are united; (John xi. 52. Eph. i. 10.) and that they should also be incorporated into lesser societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear, and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced. 4. That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, v. 23. That on them, though Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham might come, (Gal. iii. 14.) and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever it did to *Israel according to the flesh*, Rom. ix. 4. Heb. viii. 10. The gospel-church is called *the Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16.

II. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout his whole undertaking, (John xvii. 4.) particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, *Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 27, 28. He foresees with pleasure,

1. That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him; and that for this end they should be called and gathered in, that they might be unto God *for a name and a praise*. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them, and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord, will praise him, (v. 23.) even every Israelite indeed. See cxviii. 2-4.—cxxxv. 19, 20. The business of Christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is, to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they that are here called upon to praise God, are called upon to fear him.

2. That God would be glorified in the Redeemer and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to *praise God in the church*, not only because he is

the Master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the Mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the Matter of the church's praise. See Eph. iii. 21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption, and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, (1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him; (v. 24.) *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted One*, that is, of the suffering Redeemer; but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers. Though it was offered for us poor sinners, he did not despise or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son, because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This, as it is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. (2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking, and complete it. Christ says, *I will pay my vows*, v. 25. Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

III. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, v. 26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation. 1. The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as, under the law, upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar; *The meek shall eat and be satisfied*; eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ, shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labour, as they have done, for that which satisfies not. 2. They that are much in praying, shall be much in thanksgiving; *They shall praise the Lord, that seek him*, because through Christ they are sure of finding him; in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him, even while they are seeking him; and the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him. 3. The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him; *"Your heart shall live for ever"*. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God; whatever becomes of your bodies, *your hearts shall live for ever*; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, *Because I live, ye shall live also*; (John xiv. 19.) and, therefore, that life shall be as sure, and as long, as his."

IV. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people.

1. That it should reach far, v. 27, 28. That, whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now, all the ends of the world should come into the church, and, the partition-wall being taking down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, (1.) That they should be converted, they shall *remember, and turn*

to the Lord. Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is, toward true conversion. We must consider, and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. (2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve him; *They shall worship before thee, for in every place incense shall be offered to God*, Mal. i. 11. Isa. lxxvi. 23. Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, for, (v. 28.) *The kingdom is the Lord's*; his, and his only, is the universal monarchy. [1.] The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him. So that the design of the Christian religion is to receive natural religion, and its principles and laws. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and to reduce us to our native allegiance. [2.] The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed Governor among the nations; Head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

2. That it should include many of different ranks, v. 29. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. (1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones, they that be fat upon the earth, that live in pomp and power, they shall eat and worship; even they that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity. (2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel. Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust, (cxiii. 7.) that can scarcely keep life and soul together, they shall bow before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's King, (lxxii. 12.) and whose protection does, in a special manner, draw their allegiance. Or this may be understood, in general, of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition—we are going down to the dust to which we are sentenced, and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls; we cannot secure our own natural life long, nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way, to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them, and keep them alive, for ever.

V. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, shall continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away, and a generation coming up. Now, as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away and leaving the world, (v. 29. they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and it is good to die bowing before Christ; blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord,) so he shall have honour from that which is rising up, and setting out, in the world, v. 30. Observe,

1. Their application to Christ; *A seed shall serve him*, shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world, to the end of time; and, in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing Christians and gospel ministers, from generation to generation. *A seed shall serve him*; there shall be a remnant, more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God, and to whom God will give grace to serve

him: perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace does not run in a blood; he does not say *their* seed, but a seed; perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail.

2. Christ's acknowledgment of them; *They shall be accounted to him for a generation*; he will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them; his kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a seed that the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9.—lxv. 23. The generation of the righteous, God will graciously own as his treasure, his children.

3. Their agency for him; (v. 31.) *They shall come*, shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation, but to serve the honour of Christ, and the welfare of souls, in the generations to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred deposit) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things, (1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ has brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys. See Rom. i. 16, 17. (2.) That the work of our redemption, by Christ, is the Lord's own doing, (cxviii. 23.) and no contrivance of our's. We must declare to our children, that God has done this; it is his wisdom in a mystery, it is his arm revealed.

In singing this, we must triumph in the name of Christ, as above every name; must give him honour ourselves; rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

PSALM XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness, and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good Christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. I. The psalmist here claims relation to God as his Shepherd, v. 1. II. He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him as his Shepherd, v. 2, 3, 5. III. Hence he infers, That he should want no good; (v. 1.) That he needed to fear no evil; (v. 4.) That God would never leave or forsake him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake God in a way of duty, v. 6. In this, he has certainly an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which filled his soul with joy unspeakable. And as in the foregoing psalm he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good Shepherd.

A Psalm of David.

1. **THE** LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil.

my cup runneth over. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

From three very comfortable premises, David, in this psalm, draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and *therefore* that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well-grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he stands to us, and from the experience we have had of his goodness, according to that relation.

I. From God's being his Shepherd, he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, *v. 1*. See here,

1. The great care that God takes of believers; he is their Shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was, when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young, (lxxviii. 70, 71.) and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd, toward his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer, when he says, *I am the Shepherd of the sheep; the good Shepherd*, John x. 11. He that is the Shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general, (lxxx. 1.) is the Shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa. xl. 11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a Shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the Shepherd's voice, and follow him.

2. The great confidence which believers have in God; "If the Lord is my Shepherd, my Feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me." If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a-begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a-begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his Shepherd, he can boldly say, *I shall not want*. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding, and have him for their Feeder. More is implied than is expressed; not only, *I shall not want*, but, "I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me, or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time."

II. From his performing the office of a good Shepherd to him, he infers that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, *v. 2-4*. He experiences the benefit of God's presence with him, and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

1. The comforts of a living saint: God is his Shepherd, and his God; all-sufficient to all intents and purposes; David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints, as the sheep of God's pasture.

(1.) They are well-pleased, well-laid; *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*. We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father.

The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes that only in it which pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relishes that, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture, xxxvii. 16. Prov. xv. 16, 17. God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep, never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down; he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? Let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them: this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed.

(2.) They are well-guided, well-led; the Shepherd of Israel guides Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same guidance. *He leadeth me beside the still waters*. Those that feed on God's goodness must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit; disposes their affairs for the best, according to his counsel; disposes their affections and actions according to his command; directs their eye, their way, and their heart, into his love. The still waters, by which he leads them, yield them, not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people, not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters by which the saints are led; streams which flow from the fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, nor to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods, but to the silent purling waters; for the still, but running, waters, agree best with those spirits that flow out toward God, and yet do it silently. The divine guidance they are under is stripped of its metaphor, (*v. 3*.) *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness*, in the way of my duty; in that he instructs me by his word, and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God both lead us into them, and lead us in them.

(3.) They are well-helped when any thing ails them; *He restoreth my soul*, [1.] "He reduces me when I wander." No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to *go astray like lost sheep*; (cxix. 176.) they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly, and be undone. When, after one sin, David's heart smote him, and, after another, Nathan was sent to tell him, *Thou art the man*, God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. [2.] "He recovers me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart." He is the Lord our God that heals us, Exod. xv. 26. Many a time we had fainted, un-

less we had believed; and it was the good Shepherd that kept us from fainting.

2. See here the courage of a dying saint; (v. 4.) "Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity; the rather, because all he has done for me hitherto, was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake, in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his own attributes, and relations to his people." That name therefore shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me, that he who has led me, and fed me, all my life long, will not leave me at last."

Here is, (1.) Imminent danger supposed; "*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,* though I am in peril of death, though in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself," or rather, "though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reason in the world to look upon myself as a dying man, yet I am easy." Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as in the valley of the shadow of death. Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible; it is *death*, which we must all count upon; there is no discharge in that war. But, even in the supposition of the distress, there are four words which lessen the terror. It is death indeed that is before us; but, [1.] It is but the *shadow* of death, there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. [2.] It is the *valley* of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark, and dirty; but the valleys are fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. [3.] It is but a *walk* in this valley, a gentle pleasant walk: the wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. [4.] It is a walk *through* it; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain of spices on the other side of it.

(2.) This danger made light of, and triumphed over, upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do that are appointed for the slaughter. "Even in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, none of these things move me." Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death, and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child, that, through grace, is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, *O death, where is thy sting?* And there is ground enough for this confidence, [1.] Because there is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. Why should it be dreadful, when there is nothing in it hurtful? [2.] Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments; he is then at their right hand, and therefore why should they be moved? The good Shepherd will not only conduct, but convoy, his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the evening-wolves: he will not only convoy them, but comfort them then when they need most comfort. His presence shall comfort them; *Thou art with me.* His Word and Spirit shall comfort them; his *rod* and *staff*, alluding to the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which the sheep passed when they were counted, (Lev. xxvii. 32.) or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that

would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints, when they come to die, that God takes cognizance of them; (he knows them that are his); that he will rebuke the enemy; that he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called *the rod of Christ's strength*; (ex. 17.) and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

III. From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now, he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, v. 5, 6. Where we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him; (v. 5.) "*Thou fillest a table before me*; thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity;" such a bountiful Benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledges, (1.) That he had food convenient; a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. (2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him; his table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand; but prepared, and prepared *before him*. (3.) That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance; "*My cup runs over*; enough for myself, and my friends too." (4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight; *Thou anointest my head with oil*. Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favour; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him, or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, Luke vii. 46. Nay, some think, he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the *poor man's ewe-lamb*, (2 Sam. xii. 3.) that did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls; for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours; (v. 6.) he had said, (v. 1.) *I shall not want*; but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively; *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*. His hope rises, and his faith is strengthened, by being exercised. Observe, (1.) What he promises himself—goodness and mercy, all the streams of it, flowing from the fountain; pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining, supplying, mercies. (2.) The manner of the conveyance of it; It shall *follow* me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready. (3.) The continuance of it; It shall follow me *all my life long*, even to the last; for whom God loves, he loves to the end. (4.) The constancy of it; *All the days of my life*, as duly as the day comes; it shall be new every morning, (Jam. i. 22, 23.) like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. (5.) The certainty of it; *Surely* it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. (6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause; "Goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended, I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the *house of the Lord for ever*, in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. *With what I have, I am pleased much; with what I hope for,*

more." All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God; "*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*, (as long as I live,) and I will praise him while I have any being." We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to his door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning-light, which shines more and more to the perfect day; let not ours to him be like the morning-cloud, and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house, must keep close to the duties of it.

PSALM XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ; I. His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, v. 1, 2. II. The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church. 1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character, (v. 4, 6.) their charter, v. 5. 2. Concerning the King of that kingdom; and a summons to all to give him admission, v. 7. 10. It is supposed that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it; and that the intention of it, was, to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein; 2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Here is, I. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation, where our lot is cast, v. 1. We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it. No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom rules over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

(1.) When God gave the earth to the children of men, he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants, or usufructuaries; *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; the mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest; the fruits it produces; all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but, in the kingdom of providence, they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.* All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand; so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions, is but lent to us, it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world, is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or is hid in the bottom of it, is the Lord's, and he knows where to find it.

(2.) The habitable part of this earth (Prov. viii. 31.) is his in a special manner; *the world, and they that dwell therein.* We ourselves are not our own,

our bodies, our souls, are not. All souls are mine, says God; for he is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own, they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his, that know him not, nor own their relation to him. Now this comes in here, to show that though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, (v. 3-5.) it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his, and all in it, Exod. xix. 5. Ps. l. 12. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession: the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, 1 Cor. x. 26, 28. If it be sold in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions, for the earth is the Lord's, it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it; but if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, *for the earth is the Lord's*, and there is enough besides. This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others their's; *the earth is the Lord's*, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleases him?

II. The ground of this propriety; the earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods*, v. 2. It is his; for, (1.) He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter is his, for he made it out of nothing; the form is his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute, Owner, and none can let us a title to any part, but by, from, and under, him; see lxxxix. 11, 12. (2.) He made it so as no one else could; it is the creature of Omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods; a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet, if Almighty power pleases, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it; see civ. 8, 9. (3.) He continues it, he has established it, fixed it, so that, though one generation passes, and another comes, the earth abides, Eccl. i. 4. And his providence is a continued creation, cxix. 90. The founding of the earth upon the floods, should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in his holy place? 4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise, of a sudden, to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God has given to the children of men, and we are much indebted to his provi

denied for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

I. Here is an inquiry after better things, *v.* 3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had ever so much of it, we must be here but awhile, must shortly go hence, and *Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending toward God, toward heaven; will ask, "What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill, where the Lord dwells, and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him; and to abide in that happy, holy, place, where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people, and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness?" This question is much the same with that, *xv.* 1. The hill of Zion, on which the temple was built, typified the church, both visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place, David puts them in mind, that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore that by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

II. An answer to this inquiry; in which we have,

1. The properties of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands, lifted up in prayer, must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man, and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being really, that is, of being inwardly, as good as they seem to be outwardly; they have pure hearts. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts, whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. This is a pure heart, which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not, which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God; see *Matth.* *v.* 8.

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; as do not lift up their souls unto vanity, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately toward the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense; who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

(4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth, or the honour of God's name, are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

(5.) They are a praying people; (*v.* 6) *Thy is the generation of them that seek him.* In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, who are *accounted to the Lord for a generation*, *xxii.* 30. And they are such as seek God, *that seek thy face, O Jacob.* [1.] They join themselves to God, to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour, and keep themselves in his love; who, having made it the top of their happiness, make it the top of their ambition, to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently. [2.] They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them; being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before, so some understand this; they seek God's face, as Jacob, (so some,) who was *therefore* surnamed *Israel*, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him; and, associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church, (*Rev.* *iii.* 9.) shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people, (*Zech.* *viii.* 23.) shall incorporate themselves with them, and, when they *subscribe with their hands to the Lord*, shall *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, *Isa.* *xliv.* 5. As soon as ever Paul was converted, he *joined himself to the disciples*, *Acts.* *ix.* 26. They shall seek God's face in Jacob, (so some,) in the assemblies of his people; *Thy face, O God of Jacob*; so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *Seek ye me in vain.*

2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, *v.* 5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy. (1.) They shall be blessed: they shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesses are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. (2.) They shall be justified, and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, *Matth.* *v.* 6. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, (so some,) the *crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give*, *2 Tim.* *iv.* 8. (3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness, he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 8. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. 9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 10. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

What is spoken once, is spoken a second time, in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs,

and have much beauty in them. Here is, 1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory; the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission, for behold, he stands at the door, and knocks, ready to come in. 2. Inquiry once and again made concerning this mighty Prince, in whose name entrance is demanded; *Who is this King of glory?* As, when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, *Who is there?* 3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal Person that makes the demand; *It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, v. 8, 10.* Now,

(1.) This splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it; for when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called *everlasting doors*, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* And they that bear the ark are taught to answer, in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, Josh. iii. 11. Or, it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the subject more affectingly. God, in his word and ordinances, is thus to be welcomed by us. [1.] With great readiness; the door and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and, if we had 600 necks, we should bow them all to the authority of it. [2.] With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is, with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

(2.) Doubtless, it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type.

[1.] We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth, he ascended *in the clouds of heaven*, Dan. vii. 13, 14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called *everlasting*, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24. Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin, and gained a title to *enter into the holy place*, (Heb. ix. 12.) as one having authority, he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for, as the Forerunner, he is for us entered, and has *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, *Who is this King of glory?* For angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12. When the First-begotten was brought into the upper world, the angels were to worship him; (Heb. i. 6.) and, accordingly, they here ask, with wonder, "Who is he? This that cometh *with dyed garments from Buzrah?* (Isa. lxiii. 1-3.) for he appears in that word as a *Lamb that had been slain*." It is answered, that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle to save his people, and subdue his and their enemies.

[2.] We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple, it sanctifies them. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks*, Rev. iii. 20. It is required, that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is

delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand; that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, *Blessed is he that cometh*. That we may do this aright, we are concerned to ask, *Who this King of glory is?* To acquaint ourselves with him whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready; He is *Jehovah*, and will be *Jehovah our righteousness*, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is *strong and mighty*, and *the Lord of hosts*; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront: he can force his way, and can break those in pieces, with his iron rod, that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this, let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*.

PSALM XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God; the outgoings of holy desires toward his favour and grace, and the lively actings of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, I. What it is to pray, v. 1, 15. II. What we must pray for; the pardon of sin; (v. 6, 7, 18.) direction in the way of duty; (v. 4, 5.) the favour of God; (v. 16.) deliverance out of our troubles; (v. 17, 18.) preservation from our enemies; (v. 20, 21.) and the salvation of the church of God, v. 22. III. What we may plead in prayer; our confidence in God; (v. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21.) our distress, and the malice of our enemies; (v. 17, 19.) our sincerity, v. 21. IV. What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer; of guidance and instruction, (v. 8, 9, 12.) the benefit of the covenant; (v. 10.) and the pleasure of communion with God, v. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sins, to complain of, at the throne of grace.

A psalm of David.

1. **U**NTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 2. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4. Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. 6. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindness; for they *have been* ever of old. 7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Here we have David's professions of desire toward God, and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions; not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

1. He professes his desire towards God; *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*, v. 1. In the foregoing psalm, (v. 4.) it was made the character of a good man, that he *has not lift up his soul to vanity*; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the *King of glory to come in*, v. 1. To which character, to which call, David here answers, "Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee." Note, In worshipping God, we must lift up our souls to him.

Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed, and the soul employed. *Sursum corda—Up with your hearts*, was anciently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world and the things of it, by a fixed thought and active faith, we must set God before us, and let out our desires toward him as the Fountain of our happiness.

2. He professes his dependence upon God, and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence; (v. 2.) *O my God, I trust in thee*. His conscience witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in himself or in any creature, and that he had no diffidence of God, or of his power or promise. He pleases himself with this profession of faith in God. Having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well-satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil: and he pleads it with God, whose honour it is to help those that honour him by trusting in him. What men put a confidence in, is either their joy or their shame, according as it proves. Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly, (1.) That shame might not be his lot; *“Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee; let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be, in the issue, disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, keep what I have committed unto thee.”* Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; and if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would, if we should now sink under our fears, or should, in the issue, come short of our hopes. (2.) That it might not be the lot of any that trusted in God. All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and therefore, doubtless, it will be alike successful in the issue. Thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain that none who, by a believing attendance, wait on God, and, by a believing hope, wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. (3.) That it might be the lot of the transgressors; *Let them be ashamed, that transgress without cause, or vainly*, as the word is. [1.] Upon no provocation; they revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government, (so some,) without any occasion given them, not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he has wearied them. The weaker the temptation is, by which men are drawn to sin, the stronger the corruption is, by which they are driven to it. Those are the worst transgressors that sin for sinning’s sake. [2.] To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of them.

3. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, v. 4, 5. Once again, he here prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe, (1.) What he desired to learn; *“Teach me, not fine words or fine notions, but thy ways, thy paths, thy truth. The ways in which thou walkest toward me, which are all mercy and truth,”* (v. 10.) and the ways in which thou wouldest have me to walk toward thee.” Those are best taught who understand their duty, and know the good things they should do, Eccl. ii. 3. The paths of the Lord, and his truth, are the same; divine laws are all founded upon divine truths. The way of God’s precepts is the way of truth, cxix. 30. Christ is both the Way and the Truth, and therefore we must learn Christ. (2.) What he desires of God, in order to this. [1.] That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty; *“Show me thy way, and so teach me.”* In doubtful cases, we should

pray earnestly, that God would make it plain to us what he would have us to do. [2.] That he would incline his will to it, and strengthen him in it; *“Lead me, and so teach me.”* Not only as we lead one that is dim-sighted, to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble, and faint, to help him forward in the way, and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no further in the way to heaven, than God is pleased to lead us, and to hold us up. (3.) What he pleads, [1.] His great expectation from God; *Thou art the God of my salvation*. Note, Those that choose the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If God save us, he will teach us, and lead us. He that gives salvation, will give instruction. [2.] His constant attendance on God; *On thee do I wait all the day*. Whence should a servant expect direction what to do, but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it.

4. He appeals to God’s infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own; (v. 6.) *“Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and, for the sake of those mercies, lead me, and teach me; for they have been ever of old,”* (1.) *“Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name, it is thy nature and property to show mercy.”* (2.) *“Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were, before all worlds, ordained to glory.”* (3.) *“The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and ancient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, teach me now.”*

5. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins; (v. 7.) *“O remember not the sins of my youth. Lord, remember thy mercies,”* (v. 6.) which speak for me, and not my sins, which speak against me.” Here is, (1.) An implicit confession of sin; he specifies particularly the sins of his youth. Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after, because time does not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures, of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his transgressions; and the more holy, just, and good, the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. (2.) An express petition for mercy; [1.] That he might be acquitted from guilt; *“Remember not the sins of my youth; remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them.”* When God pardons sin, he is said to *remember it no more*, which denotes a plenary remission, he forgives, and forgets. [2.] That he might be accepted in God’s sight; *“Remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour.”* We need desire no more to make us happy, than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, *“according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness-sake.”* Note, It is God’s goodness, and not ours; his mercy, and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin, and all the good we stand in need of. This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God’s mercy and grace.

8. Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9.

The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. 10. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11. For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. 12. What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose: 13. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers. Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here, in the middle of the psalm, he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks, and is satisfied, from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer; but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But, in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon v. 7. It is that, (v. 11.) *Pardon mine iniquity*. But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; "*For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity*, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, for thy glory's sake, for thy promise's sake, for thine own sake," Isa. xliii. 25. But the latter is very surprising; "*Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*; and the greater it is, the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it." It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 7. "It is great, and therefore I am undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great; I see it to be so." The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

I. To whom these promises belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, (v. 8.) He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and, in order to that, to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those who, though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word. To such, 1. As keep his covenant and his testimonies, (v. 10.) as take his precepts for their rule, and his promises for their portion; as, having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and, having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though, through the infirmity of the flesh, they sometimes break the command, yet, by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. 2. To such as

fear him, (v. 12.) and again, (v. 14.) as stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority, and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath, and are afraid of offending him.

II. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are too things which ratify and confirm all the promises.

1. The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it; we may therefore depend upon God's promises, for good and upright is the Lord, and therefore he will be as good as his word. He is so kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. *Faithful is he who hath promised*, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

2. The agreeableness of all he says and does, with the perfections of his nature; (v. 10.) *All the paths of the Lord*; that is, all his promises, and all his providences, are mercy and truth; they are, like himself, good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he does comes from love, covenant-love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed, and his word fulfilled. What a rich satisfaction may this be to good people, that, whatever afflictions they are exercised with, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

III. What these promises are,

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers; (v. 4, 5.) *Show me thy ways, and lead me*. We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith, most on those promises which suit our present case. (1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching; when they see themselves sinners, and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He does, by his gospel, make known this way to all, and, by his Spirit, open the understanding, and guide penitent sinners that inquire after it. The Devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so leads them to heaven. (2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach, those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the divine guidance; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. These he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty; so that they may keep conscience void of offence; and he will do it judiciously, (so some,) that is, he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. (3.) *Him that feareth the Lord, he will teach in the way that he shall choose*; either in the way that God shall choose, or that the good man shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooses the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy; (v. 13.) *His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness*, marg. With respect to those that devote them-

selves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, it is their own fault, if they be not easy. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and, much more, that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick, and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him, and repose in him, as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to balance them all, and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and their's as much of this world as is good for them; *His seed shall inherit the earth.* Next to our care concerning our souls, is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. They that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it, and the comfort of it; and their children shall fare the better for their prayers, when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself; (v. 14.) *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* They understand his word, for *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God,* John vii. 17. They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them, better than others. *Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. He calls them not *servants*, but *friends*, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

15. *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord;* for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for *I am* desolate and afflicted. 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18. Look upon mine affliction, and my pain: and forgive all my sins. 19. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm, as he began, with the professions of dependence upon God and desire toward him.

I. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in. His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, v. 15. He was *desolate and afflicted*, v. 16. It is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone, and keep silence, Lam. iii. 28. David calls himself *desolate and solitary*, because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, *the troubles of his heart were enlarged*; (v. 17.) he grew more and more melancholy, and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was it that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his out-

ward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, v. 18. His enemies, that persecuted him, were many and malicious, they hated him; and very barbarous, it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, v. 19. Such were Christ's enemies, and the persecutors of his church.

II. He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses; (v. 15.) *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.* Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever toward their idols, Isa. xvii. 7, 8. But it is an eye of faith that we must have toward God, who is a Spirit, Zech. ix. 1. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways, we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this, in his affliction; for, because his eyes were ever toward the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net; that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, (so some,) from the designs of his enemies against him, so others. Those that have their eye ever toward God, shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God; (v. 20.) *Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee;* and of expectation from him, *I wait on thee*, v. 21. It is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait, for the salvation of the Lord.

III. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself; see how he begs, (1.) For the remission of sin; (v. 18.) *Forgive all my sins.* Those were his heaviest burthens, and which brought upon him all his other burthens. He had begged (v. 7.) for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and (v. 11.) for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which, some think, was his sin in the matter of Uriah. But here he prays, Lord, *forgive all, take away all iniquity.* It is observable, that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it; "*Look upon my affliction and my pain,* and do with it as thou pleasest." But, as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, *Forgive all my sins.* When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins, to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions, to get them removed. Yet he prays, (2.) For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawals from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, (v. 16.) *Turn thee unto me.* And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and, in reference to that, he prays, "*O bring thou me out of my distresses.*" I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one, or make one." His enemies were spiteful, and, in reference to that, he prays, "*O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands.*"

Four things he mentions by way of plea, to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration. [1.] He pleads God's mercy; *Have mercy upon me.* Men of the greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. [2.] He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart; all which made him the proper object of divine mercy. [3.] He pleads the iniquity of his enemies; "*Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands.*" [4.] He pleads his own integrity, v. 21. Though he had owned himself guilty before God and had confessed his sins against him; yet,

as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience, that he had done them no wrong; which was his comfort, when they hated him with cruel hatred; and he prays that this might preserve him. This intimates that he did not expect to be safe, any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness; and that, while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be; this will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God; (v. 22.) *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.* David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel. Why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for when we have ever so much business of our own at the throne of grace, we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would, at length, give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to *redeem Israel from his iniquities*, (cxxx. 8.) and so to redeem them from their troubles. It refers also to the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

PSALM XXVI.

Holy David is, in this psalm, putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience; to both which he appeals touching his integrity, (v. 1, 2.) for the proof of which, he alleges, I. His constant regard to God and his grace, v. 3. II. His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, v. 4, 5. III. His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, v. 6. . 8. Having thus proved his integrity, 1. He deprecates the doom of the wicked, v. 9, 10. 2. He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, v. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be, and do, that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences; and comfort ourselves with it, as David does, if we can say, that in any measure we have, through grace, answered to these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests, that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence, was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. *We are complete in him.*

A psalm of David.

JUDGE me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted at all times in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3. For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth. 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not set with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very bad man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers, that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David does in this case,

I. He appeals to God's righteous sentence; (v. 1.) "*Judge me, O God; be thou Judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put them to shame that falsely accuse me.*" Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that, in a controversy with him, he could appeal to no other than to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me*; (cxliii. 2.) *Remember not my transgressions*; (xxv. 7.) there he appeals to God's mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as, cxliii. 1. Or thus; he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy, do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope, that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused, that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocence, and a comfort to all who are sincere in religion, that God himself is a Witness to their sincerity.

II. He submits to his unerring search; (v. 2.) *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me*, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise. David prays, *Lord, examine me*; which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him, and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself, and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God, and his loyalty to his prince, (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender,) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that whoever would, might look into his heart.

III. He solemnly protests his sincerity; (v. 1.) "*I have walked in mine integrity*; my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another." It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out, that, by the grace of God, we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produces here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronise and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with reputation, (*Therefore I shall not slide*,) and that they should not prevail, who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blenish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, lxii. 4. They that are sincere in religion may trust in God, that they shall not slide, that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, v. 3. (1.) He aimed at God's favour as his end, and chief good; *Thy loving-kindness is before*

mine eyes. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion, we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors, and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had experience of all our days. If we set God's loving-kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being *followers of him that is good* in his goodness; (1 Pet. iii. 13.) if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. "*I have walked in thy truth*," according to thy law, for thy law is truth." Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving-kindness, that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving-kindness. Those certainly walk well, that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, v. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despised him*, 1 Sam. x. 27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, nor not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who, he had any reason to think, were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take. "*I have not sit with them, and I will not go in with them.*" Note, Our good practices hitherto, are then evidences of our integrity, when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of, when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company, not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity, as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they *dissemble; when they speak fair, believe them not.* (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not *go in with them*, he would not choose such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them; he might fall in with them, but he would not, by appointment and assignation, go in with them: or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary: he would not concern with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did,

as they that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, i. 1. He would not sit in counsel with them, upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them, to condemn the generation of the righteous. (5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here says, not only "*I have shunned it*," but "*I have hated it*," cxxxix. 21. (6.) The congregation of evil doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated *ecclesiam malignantium—the church of the malignant*; so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men, in combination, make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this, David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners, and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet, otherwise, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers; thus too David was an example to Christians, when they join themselves to Christ, *to save themselves from this untoward generation*, Acts ii. 40.

6. I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men; 10. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

In these verses,

1. David produces a further evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, as the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity, if we attend upon them, as David here tells us he did, v. 6-8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. "*I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome.*" This is like that, (1 Cor. xi. 28.) *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*; so prepared. This denotes, (1.) Habitual preparation; "*I will wash my hands in innocency*, I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it, and forbid my drawing nigh to God." See xxiv. 3, 4 (2.) Actual preparation; it alludes to the ceremony of the priests' washing, when they went in to minister, Exod. xxx. 20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for

solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity and hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that, (which was signified by *washing the hands*, Deut. xxi. 6.) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity, by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is, in a justified state, has need thus to *wash his feet*, (John xiii. 10.) to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent, is *pure innocens—almost innocent*; and he that is pardoned, is so far innocent, that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them; *I will compass thine altar*; aluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and, probably, the offerers likewise did so at some distance, denoting a diligent regard to what was done, and a dutiful attendance in the service. "*I will compass it*; I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them." David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our Altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and *live upon*, Heb. xiii. 10. (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances, he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship, as the place where God's honour dwelt, (v. 8.) and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name; to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible, to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this, he appeals to God, "Lord thou knowest how dearly *I have loved the habitation of thy house*, (v. 8.) the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage, the place where thine honour dwells." David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See 1 Sam. xx. 27. "But, Lord," says he, "though I cannot come to the habitation of thine house, I love it, my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there." Note, All that truly love God, truly love the ordinances of God, and *therefore* love them, because in them he manifests his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him; he loved the habitation of his house, his church among men, loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, find it to be a constant pleasure, a comfortable evidence of

their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

II. David, having given proofs of his integrity, earnestly prays, with a humble confidence toward God, (such as they have whose hearts condemn them not,) that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked; (v. 9, 10.) *Gather not my soul with sinners*. Here, 1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable, that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. "They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness, (for their right hand is full of bribes which they have taken to pervert justice,) yet that will make their case never the better; for *what is a man profited, if he gain the world, and lose his soul?*" 2. He dreads having his lot with them; he never loved them, nor associated with them, in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them, and will call for them again. See Job xxxiv. 14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, (1 Sam. xxv. 29.) or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, Matth. xiii. 30. Death gathers us to our people, to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous. David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides are of that mind, which if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

III. David, with a holy humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, v. 11, 12. 1. He promises that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: "*As for me*, whatever others do, *I will walk in mine integrity*." Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. 2. He prays for the divine grace, both to enable him to do so, and to give him the comfort of it; "Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying." Be we ever so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. 3. He pleases himself with his steadiness; "*My foot stands in an even place*, where I shall not stumble, and whence I shall not fall." This he speaks, as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. 4. He promises himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord; that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises; and that though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil-doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better, it is the more like heaven.

PSALM XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm, before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles; and, perhaps, upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it, when he was old, upon occasion of the wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him, (2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17.) and his people, thereupon, resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out toward God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, I. The courage and holy bravery of his faith, v. 1. 3. II. The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, v. 4. 6. III. His desire toward God, and his favour and grace, v. 7. 9, 11, 12. IV. His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, v. 10, 13, 14. And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

1. **THE LORD** is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this *will I be confident*. 4. One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

I. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. 1. *The Lord is my light*, David's subjects called him *the light of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxi. 17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining Light: but he owns that he shone, as the moon does, with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them; *The Lord is my Light*. God is a Light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. 2. "He is my Salvation, in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved." 3. "He is the *Strength of my life*; not only the Protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the Strength of my frail, weak, life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away." God, who is a believer's Light, is the Strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

II. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom*

shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid? If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his Light, he fears no shades; if God be his Salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, v. 2. His enemies came upon him, to eat up his flesh; aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell; not, "He smote them, and they fell," but, "They stumbled and fell;" they were so confounded and weakened, that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking, were made to stagger, and fall to the ground, John xviii. 6. The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore, these being fallen, he is fearless of the rest; "Though they be numerous, a host of them; though they be daring, and their attempts threatening, though they encamp against me, an army against one man; though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protect us: nay, in this assurance that God is for me, *I will be confident*." Two things he will be confident of; 1. That he shall be safe; "if God is my Salvation, *in the time of trouble he shall hide me*; he shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it." God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress, as he did, (Jer. xxxvi. 26.) but he will himself be their Hiding-Place, Ps. xxxii. 7. His providence shall, it may be, keep them safe; however, his grace shall make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, Prov. xviii. 10. "He shall hide me, not in the strong holds of Engedi, (1 Sam. xxiii. 29.) but *in the secret of his tabernacle*." The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people; these are the secret of his tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening, billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them; it is a rock that is *higher than we*, lxi. 2. 2. That he shall be victorious, (v. 6.) "*Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*; not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them." David here, by faith in the promise of God, triumphs before the victory, and is as sure, not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

III. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, v. 4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God, that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element, when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us, that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus. He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he does not say, "*One thing have I desired*, in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number," or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle; but "*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well."

Observe, 1. What it is he desires; *to dwell in the house of the Lord*. In the courts of God's house

the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. Disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was, would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging, among them. Or rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. *Therefore* he longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged; not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might *go up to the house of the Lord*, Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the son abides ever. Do we hope that the praising of God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this; "This is the one thing *I have desired of the Lord*, and which I will seek after." If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift, and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it; he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, Prov. xviii. 1.

3. What he had in his eye in it; he would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there, in the feasts upon the sacrifices, nor for the music and good singing that were there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple*. He desired to attend in God's courts, (1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being, and his perfections; his holiness is his beauty; (cx. 3.) his goodness is his beauty, Zech. ix. 17. The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love, we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it, that is amiable, that is admirable. When, with fixedness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets; and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself. (2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would *inquire in God's temple*; Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do*? For the sake of these two things, he desired that one thing, *to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of his life*; for blessed are they that do so, they will be still praising him, (lxxxiv. 4.) both in speaking to him, and in hearing from him. Marv's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful, and the good part.

4. What advantage he promised himself, could he but have a place in God's house; (1.) There he should be quiet and easy; their troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on

high, v. 5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there, not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, 2 Kings, xi. 3. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, Neh. vi. 10. But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and cheerful; there he would offer sacrifice of joy, v. 6. For God's work is its own wages; there *he would sing, yea he would sing praises to the Lord*. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy, ought to be the matter of our praise. And when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praises. It is for the glory of our God, that we should sing in his ways: and whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praise. *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

7. Hear, O LORD, *when I cry with my voice*: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother for sake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

David, in these verses, expresses,

1. His desire toward God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord; yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.

1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience; "*Hear, O Lord, when I cry*, not only with my heart, but, as one in earnest, with my voice too." He bespeaks also an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness; *Have mercy upon me, and answer me*, v. 7. If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, v. 8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings, uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance, unless he *hold forth to us the golden sceptre*. David therefore, going to pray, fastens, in his thoughts, upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and reverently touches, as it were, the top of the golden sceptre which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee*, (so it begins in the original, *or of thee*, *Seek ye my face*; he first revolved that, and preached that over again to himself; and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once; *thou saidst*, (so it may be supplied,) *Seek ye my face*; and then he

returns what he had so meditated upon, in this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship, it is seeking the face of God; this it is in God's precept, *Seek ye my face*. He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*; and nothing less will I take up with." The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things; (cxlv. 16.) but it is only the shining of his face, that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, iv. 6, 7. (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty; *Thou saidst, Seek ye my face*; it is not only a permission, but a precept; and his commanding us to seek, implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, *Seek ye me, in vain*. God calls us to seek his face, in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us, by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits, to seek his face; he calls us, by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities, God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation; the call is immediately returned; *My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. The call was general, "*Seek ye my face*;" but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, "*I will seek it*." The word does us no good, when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek ye my face*; the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*; like that, (Jer. iii. 22.) *Behold, we come unto thee*. A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

(1.) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that; (v. 9.) "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, in obedience to thy command; therefore *hide not thy face from me*; let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *but not thy servant away in anger*." He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell, but that?

(2.) For the continuance of his presence with him; "Thou hast been my Help formerly, and *thou art the God of my salvation*; and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *Oh leave me not, neither forsake me*; withdraw not the operations of thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless."

(3.) For the benefit of a divine guidance; (v. 11.) "*Teach me thy way, O Lord*; give me to understand the meaning of thy providences toward me, and make them plain to me. And give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely." It is not policy, but plainness, that is, downright honesty, that will direct us into, and keep us in, the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his *enemies*; or, as the margin reads it, his *observers*. His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, 1 Sam. xviii. 9. This quickened him to pray, "Lord, lead me in a plain path, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge."

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection; (v. 12.) "*Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies*. Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their con-

sciences; for *false witnesses are risen up against me*, that aim further than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty, it is the blood, precious blood, they thirst after." Herein, David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

II. He expresses his dependence upon God.

1. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed him; (v. 10.) "*When my father and my mother forsake me*, the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief, and with most reason, when they either die, or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me or unmindful of me, and will not help me when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was, that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know *the Lord will take me up*, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up, and saved from perishing." His time to help those that trust in him, is, when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort; with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the especial care of the Divine Providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, in a way that one would not have expected. God is a surer and better Friend than our earthly parents are, or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, v. 13. He believed he should *see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*; if he had not done so, he should have fainted under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint, when their troubles become grievous and tedious; their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail; but then faith is a sovereign cordial, it keeps them from desponding under their burthen, and from despairing of relief, keeps them hoping, and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves. But what was it, the belief of which kept David from fainting?—*That he should see the goodness of the Lord*, which now seemed at a distance. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, that is, (1.) In this world, that he should outlive his troubles, and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul. (2.) In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem, where the lively oracles were; in comparison with the heathen that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called *the land of the living*; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness; see 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. Or, (3.) In heaven. It is that land alone that may truly be called *the land of the living*, where there is no more death; this earth is the land of the dying. There is nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burthens; (v. 14.) whether he says it to himself, or to his friends, it comes all to one, this is that which encourages him. He shall strengthen thy heart, shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength, (1.) Keep close to God and to your duty. Wait on the Lord by faith, and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will, *wait, I say, on the*

Lord; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. (2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties. *Be of good courage*; let your hearts be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. They that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

PSALM XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant, and now in distress, (v. 1..3.) to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, v. 4, 5. The latter part of the psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses, (v. 6..8.) to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, v. 9. So that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in, when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but, at the same time, preparing to praise him for his deliverance, and by faith giving him thanks for it, before it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered, and recorded for his own and others' benefit, the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might relish the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

A psalm of David.

1. **U**NTO thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. 2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. 3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. 4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. 5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

In these verses, David is very earnest in prayer.

I. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now that, in his distress, he called upon him, v. 1, 2. Observe his faith in prayer; *O Lord, my Rock*; denoting his belief of God's power, "He is a Rock;" and his dependence upon that power, "He is my Rock, on whom I build my hope." Observe his fervency in prayer; "*To thee will I cry*," as one in earnest, being ready to sink, unless thou come in with seasonable succour." And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer; "Be not silent to me, as one angry at my prayers; (lxxx. 4.) Lord, speak to me, answer me *with good words, and comfortable words*; (Zech. i. 13.) though the thing I pray for be not given me, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear it. Lord, speak for me, in answer to my prayers; plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications."

Two things he pleads; 1. The sad despair he should be in, if God slighted him; "If thou be silent to me, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am like them that go down into the pit—I am a dead man, lost and undone; if God be not my Friend, appear not to me, and appear not for me, my hope and my help are perished." Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul, as the want of

God's favour, and the sense of his displeasure. *I shall be like them that go down to hell*; (so some understand it;) for what is the misery of the damned, but this, that God is for ever silent to them, and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. 2. The good hopes he had, that God would favour him; *I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle*; which denotes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation, thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil, is here, as elsewhere, called the *oracle*; there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to *dwell between the cherubims*, and thence he spake to his people, Numb. vii. 89. That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven; (Heb. ix. 24.) and from God, as our Father in heaven, we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the *oracles of God*, and to them we must have an eye, in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

II. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before; (xxvi. 9.) "*Gather not my soul with sinners*. Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, *draw me not away from that, with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity*;" (v. 3.) 1. "Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me; they flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me, but they have a design upon me, for mischief is in their heart, they aim to disturb me, nay, to destroy me. Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success, against me, except it be given them from above." 2. "Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do. Let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments, or their allurements, from thy holy oracle, (where I desire to dwell all the days of my life,) to practise any wicked works;" see cxli. 4. "Lord, never leave me to myself, to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety, as they use for my ruin. Let no event of providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either into the imitation, or into the interest, of wicked people." Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. "Save me from being involved in their doom; let not me be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace, while war is in their hearts." Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins, have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Rev. xviii. 4.

III. He imprecates the just judgment of God upon the workers of iniquity; (v. 4.) *Give them according to their deeds*. This is not the language of passion or revenge, nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But, 1. Thus he would show how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable than to be dealt with according to their deeds. 2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world; "Lord, they think all well that they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices; Lord, *give them after the work of their hands*, and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do, because it goes unpunished," xciv

1. 2. 3. This prayer is a prophecy, that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds, according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers; "*They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds*, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let them be treacherously dealt with, who have thus dealt treacherously;" see Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xviii. 6.—xiii. 10. Observe, He foretells that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule, in dealing with the wicked, surely he will do so, in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not compass it.

IV. He foretells their destruction, for their contempt of God and his hand; (v. 5.) "*Because they regard not the works of the Lord*, and the operations of his hands, by which he manifests himself and speaks to the children of men; he shall destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up." Note, A stupid regardlessness of the works of God is the cause of the sin of sinners, and so becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handy-works, which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his which is revealed *from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? See Isa. v. 12.

In singing this, we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity, and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6. Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7. The LORD is my strength and my shield: my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him. 8. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,

I. David gives God thanks for the answer given to his prayers, as affectionately as, a few verses before, he had begged it, v. 6. *Blessed be the Lord*. How soon are the saints' sorrow turned into songs, and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed, (v. 2.) *Hear the voice of my supplications*; and by the same faith he gives thanks, (v. 6.) that *God had heard the voice of his supplications*. Note, 1. They that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. "He hath heard me, (graciously accepted me,) and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already." 2. What we win by prayer, we must

wear with praise; has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name.

II. He encourages himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him; having given to God the glory of his grace, (v. 6.) he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, v. 7. This is the method of attaining peace; let it begin with praise that it is attainable. Let us first bless God, and then bless ourselves. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God; "*The Lord is my Strength*, to support me, and carry me on, through all my services and sufferings. He is my Shield, to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so."

2. His experience of the benefit of that dependence; "*My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise*; and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been often helped; not only God has given to me, in his due time, the help I trusted to him for, but my very trust in him has helped me, in the mean time, and kept me from fainting,"

xxvii. 13. The very actings of faith are present aids to a drooping spirit, and often help it at a dead lift.

3. His improvement of this experience. He had the pleasure of it; *therefore my heart greatly rejoices*. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while, in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; *when my heart greatly rejoices, with my song will I praise him*. Thus must we express our gratitude, it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

III. He pleases himself with the interest which all good people, through Christ, have in God; (v. 8.) "*The Lord is their Strength*; not mine only, but the Strength of every believer." Note, The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit from the light of the sun, so neither from the light of God's countenance, for others' sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their Strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2. He is their Strength, the Strength of all Israel, because he is the saving Strength of his anointed, that is, 1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king, and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself *God's anointed*, because it was the unction he had received, that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his Anointed, his Messiah, in the anti-type. God was his saving Strength, qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it; see lxxxix. 21. Isa. xlix. 5.—1. 7, 9. And so he becomes their Strength, the Strength of all the saints; he strengthened him that is the church's Head, and from him diffuses strength to all the members; has commanded his strength, and so *strengthens what he has wrought for us*, lxxviii. 28.—lxxx. 17, 18.

IV. He concludes with a short, but comprehensive, prayer for the church of God, v. 9. He prays for Israel, not as his people, "save *my people*, and bless mine inheritance," though they were so, but, "*thine*." God's interest in them, lay nearer his heart than his own; *We are thy people*, is a good plea, Isa. lxiv. 9.—lxiii. 19. *I am thine, save me*. God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world, he has from them. *The Lord's portion is his people*. That which he begs of God for them,

is, 1. That he would save them from their enemies, and the dangers they were exposed to. 2. That he would bless them with all good, flowing from his favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. 3. That he would feed them; bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. *Rule them*; so the margin. "Direct their counsels and actions aright, and overrule their affairs for good. Feed them and rule them; set pastors, set rulers, over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding." 4. That he would lift them up for ever; lift them up out of their troubles and distresses; and do this, not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. "Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven." There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink, or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, who are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

PSALM XXIX.

It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters, that David penned this psalm upon occasion, and just at the time, of a great storm of thunder, lightning, and rain; as the eighth psalm was his meditation in a moon-shine night, and the nineteenth in a sun-shine morning. It is good to take occasion, from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature, to give glory to him. So composed was David, and so cheerful, even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm: *for though the earth be removed, yet will we not fear.* I. He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, v. 1, 2. II. To convince them of the greatness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder, and lightning, and thunder-showers; (v. 3.-9.) his sovereign dominion over the world; (v. 10.) and his special favour to his church, v. 11. Great and high thoughts of God should fill us, in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the LORD is upon many waters. 4. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. 8. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. 10. The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. 11. The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm, we have,

I. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God. Every clasp

of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself, and other princes, to give glory to the great God. Observe, 1. Who they are, that are called to this duty; "*O ye mighty, (v. 1.) ye sons of the mighty, who have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, who have royal blood running in your veins.*" It is much for the honour of the great God, that the great men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because, high as they are, he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must vail to him, but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgement they owe to him for it. 2. How often this call is repeated; *Give unto the Lord*, and again, and a third time, *Give unto the Lord*. This intimates, that the mighty men are backward to this duty, and are with difficulty persuaded to it; but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men, that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourishes, when the *kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it*, Rev. xxi. 24. 3. What they are called to; to give unto the Lord: not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, or as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already; *Who hath first given to him?* But the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him; "*Give unto the Lord your yourselves*, in the first place, and then your services; *give unto the Lord glory and strength*, acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty, and irresistible power; and what glory and strength he has, by his providence, intrusted you with, offer it to him, to be used for his honour in his service. Give him your crowns, let them be laid at his feet; give him your sceptres, your swords, your keys; put all into his hand, that you, in the use of them, may be to him for a name and a praise." Princes value themselves by their glory and strength; these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they.

This demand of homage from the mighty, may be looked upon as directed either to the grantees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, the princes of the tribes, (and it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss,) or to the neighbouring kings, whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel, and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty, is said to all, *Worship God*; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Now we have here, (1.) The nature of religious worship; it is *giving to the Lord the glory due to his name*, v. 2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name; it is impossible that we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject; but, when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would, in hearing and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. (2.) The rule of the performance of religious exercises; *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*; which denotes, [1.] The Object of our worship; the glorious Majesty of God is called *the beauty of holiness*, 2 Chron. xx. 21. In the worship of God, we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him,

not only as infinitely awful, and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable, and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, Rev. iv. 8. Or, [2.] The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the *beauty of holiness*, xlviii. 1, 2. Jer. xvii. 12. The beauty of the sanctuary was, the exact agreement of the worship there performed, with the divine appointment—the pattern in the mount. Now, under the gospel, solemn assemblies of Christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, [3.] The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that which puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

II. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God, if we consider, 1. His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name *Jehovah, I am that I am*; which is repeated here no less than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I do not recollect that there is the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name, and give him the glory due to it. 2. His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men, know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion.

(1.) In the kingdom of nature. In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder, and lightning, and rain, we may see,

[1.] His glory. It is the God of glory that thunders, v. 3. It is God that thunders, it is the *noise of his voice*, (Job xxxvii. 2.) and it speaks him a God of glory; so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion, the lightning; to the hearing and to the sight nothing is more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men, as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. Some observe, that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called *the voice of the Lord*; not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks loud, and reaches far, but because God often spake in thunder, particularly at mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be *upon the waters*, upon *many waters*; (v. 3.) it reaches over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament; it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder, (his ears being made to tingle with it,) will own that *the voice of the Lord is full of majesty*, (xxix. 4.) enough to make the highest humble—for none can *thunder with a voice like him*, and the proudest tremble—for if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable, thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and admirings of whom the power of godliness does so much consist. *O Lord our God, thou art very great!*

[2.] His power; (v. 4.) *The voice of the Lord is powerful*, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders; they that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature. *First*, Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts; (v. 5, 6.) *The voice of*

the Lord, in the thunder, often brake the cedars, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself, on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sirion to dance; the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken, (v. 8.) the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunders, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbouring kingdoms that warred with Israel, and opposed David; as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on mount Hermon, and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. *Secondly*, Fires have been kindled by lightnings, and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunderbolts; (lxxviii. 48.) accordingly, the voice of the Lord, in the thunder, is here said to *divide the flames of fire*, (v. 7.) to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them, and do execution by them. *Thirdly*, The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve sooner, and some think more easily, than otherwise they would. The hind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace the poet owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this here, *lib. 1. ode 34*. The thunder is said here to *discover the forest*, that is, it so terrifies the wild beasts of the forest, that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves, and so are discovered. Or it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders, let us think of this psalm; and whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his beside this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

(2.) In the kingdom of Providence, v. 10. God is to be praised as the Governor of the world of mankind. *He sits upon the flood, he sits King for ever*. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as King in the throne which he has *prepared in the heavens*, (ciii. 19.) where he takes cognizance of, and gives orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and does all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, [1.] The power of his kingdom; *He sits upon the flood*. As he has founded the earth, so he has founded his own throne, upon the floods, xxiv. 2. The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the tosses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose or to the counsels of the Eternal Mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the floods, (xciii. 3, 4.) but the Lord sits upon it; he crushes it, conquers it, and completes his own purposes, in despite of all the devices that are in men's hearts. The word here translated *the flood*, is never used but concerning Noah's flood, and therefore some think that it is which is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood, as a Judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly, that was swept away by it. And he still sits upon the flood, restraining the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise

never to destroy the earth any more by a flood, Gen. ix. 11. Isa. liv. 9. [2.] The perpetuity of his kingdom; *He sits King for ever*; no period can, or shall, be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

(3.) In the *kingdom of grace*; here his glory shines brightest, [1.] In the adoration he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, v. 9. *In his temple*, where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind, and attend him with their praises, there does *every one speak of his glory*; in the world, every man sees it, or, at least, *may behold it afar off*; (Job xxxvi. 25.) but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. *All his works do praise him*, they minister matter for praise; but his saints only do bless him, and speak of his glory in his works, cxlv. 10. [2.] In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, v. 11. *First*, He will enable them for his service; *He will give strength to his people*, to fortify them against every evil work, and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. *Secondly*, He will encourage them in his service; *He will bless his people with peace*. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. *The work of righteousness is peace: great peace have they that love thy law*; but much more the crown of righteousness: the end of the righteous is peace, it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble, the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

PSALM XXX.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedicating of his house of cedar, and sung in that pious solemnity, though there is not any thing in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect, from divers passages in the psalm itself, that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. I. He here praises God for the deliverances he had wrought for him, v. 1. 3. II. He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourages them to trust in him, v. 4, 5. III. He blames himself for his former security, v. 6, 7. IV. He recollects the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, v. 8. 10. With them he stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, v. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we ought to remember with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us, for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him, and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

A psalm and song, at the dedication of the house of David.

1. **I** WILL extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. 3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 5. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and, though not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to

dedicate it to God, Deut. xx. 5. David did so, when his house was built, and he took possession of it; (2 Sam. v. 11.) for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service, as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should, at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves, our families, and all our family affairs, to God's guidance and care; must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves, and all our's, to his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away iniquity far from our tabernacles, and that we and our houses will serve the Lord, both in the duties of family worship, and in all instances of gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the rededication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion.

In these verses,

I. David does himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him; (v. 1.) *"I will extol thee, O Lord; I will extol thy name, will praise thee as One high and lifted up. I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel."* He *raiseth up the poor out of the dust*. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound, in gratitude, to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little.

Three things magnify David's deliverance:

1. That it was the defeat of his enemies. They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done, (though it is a barbarous thing,) if he had died of this sickness, or perished in this distress: see xli. 11.

2. That it was an answer to his prayers; (v. 2.) *I cried unto thee*. All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him; giving way, in this manner, to our grief, will ease a burthened spirit. *"I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the distempered body, healed the disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disordered, distracted, affairs of the kingdom."* It is what God glories in, *I am the Lord that healeth thee*, (Exod. xv. 26.) and we must give him the glory of it.

3. That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to *go down into the pit*, and yet rescued, and kept alive, v. 3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable are they to ourselves, and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

II. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his goodwill to all his saints; (v. 4.) *Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his*. All that are truly saints, he owns for his; there is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created, and sanctified, made, and made saints, that they be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him; why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in concert with them?

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him; *"Let them give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;*

let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations." God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels, in their praises, fasten most upon, Isa. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness; and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints, that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, or more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign that we are in some measure partakers of his holiness, if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him.

(1.) We have found his frowns very short; though we have deserved they should have been everlasting, and that he should have been angry with us, till he had consumed us, and should never have been reconciled, yet *his anger endureth but for a moment*, v. 5. When we offend him, he is angry; but, as he is slow to anger, and not soon provoked, so, when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation, his anger is soon turned away, and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will *gather them with everlasting kindness*, Isa. liv. 7, 8. If weeping endure for a night, and it be a wearisome night, yet, as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter; weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues, so long the saints' weeping continues; but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored, the affliction is easily pronounced light and momentary.

(2.) We have found his smiles very sweet; *In his favour is life*, all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul, is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that, we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. 8. I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12. To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have, in these verses, an account of three

several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart toward God in each of those estates—what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of which we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two what we should be.

I. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, and over-confident of the continuance of it; (v. 6, 7.) "*In my prosperity*, when I was in health of body, and God had given me rest from all mine enemies, I said I shall never be moved; I never thought either of having my body distempered, or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account." Such complete victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind, and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes, not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness; *Thou, through thy favour, hast made my mountain to stand strong*, v. 7. He does not look upon it as his heaven, (as worldly people do, who make their prosperity their felicity,) only his mountain; it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level; this he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him; imagining, perhaps, that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share, and should have none in his latter end; or that God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, 1. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise; *To-morrow shall be as this day*. As if we should think, when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. 2. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect, with shame, upon our security, as our folly, as David does here, that we may be wiser another time, and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passes away.

II. On a sudden, he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. 1. His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved, when he grew secure, that he was least safe; "*Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*, in mind, body, or estate." In every change of his condition, he still kept his eye upon God, and as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so, in his adversity, he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befall him; when the sun sets, night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day. 2. When his mountain was shaken, he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. *Is any afflicted?* is any troubled? *let him pray*. Though God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable, if we turn from him. No, let us learn to *pray in the dark*; (v. 8.) *I cried to thee, O Lord*. It seems, God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told, for it seems he kept account of it, (1.) What he pleaded; (v. 9.) That God would be no gainer by his death; *What profit is there in my blood?* implying, that he would willingly die, if he could thereby do any real service to God, or his country, (Phil. ii. 17.) but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be, if he had died in the bed of honour. "Lord," says he, "wilt thou sell one of thine own people for nought,

and not increase thy wealth by the price?" xlv. 12. Nay, that, in his honour, God would seem to be a Loser by his death; *Shall the dust praise thee?* The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust, which returns to the earth, shall not praise him, nor declare his truth. The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. "Lord," says David, "if I die now, what will become of the promise made to me? Who shall declare the truth of that?" The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour; and then we ask aright for life, when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him. (2.) What he prayed for; (v. 10.) he prayed for mercy to pardon; (*Have mercy upon me;*) and for grace to help in time of need; *Lord, be thou my Helper.* On these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16.

III. In due time, God delivered him out of his troubles, and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered, and his *mourning was turned into dancing*, v. 11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sackcloth with which, in a humble compliance with the Divine Providence, he had clad himself, was loosed; his griefs were balanced; his fears were silenced; his comforts returned; and he was girded with gladness: joy was made his ornament, was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him, as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man. As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teaches us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be; so his sudden return to a prosperous condition teaches us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm, and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale.

But what temper of mind was he in, upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What does he say now? He tells us, v. 12. 1. His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that God girded him with gladness, to the end that he might be the *sweet psalmist of Israel*; (2 Sam. xxiii. 1.) that his *glory might sing praise to God*, that is, his tongue; for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God; or his soul; for that is our glory above the beasts, that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him, in singing psalms. They that are kept from being silent in the pit, must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent, and constant, and public, in praising God. 2. These praises were likely to be everlasting; *I will give thanks unto thee for ever.* This bespeaks a gracious resolution that he would persevere to the end in praising God, and a gracious hope that he should never want fresh matter for praise, and that he should shortly be there where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that concern us; to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

PSALM XXXI.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; some passages in it agree particularly to the narrow escape he had at Keilah, (1 Sam. xxiii. 13.) then in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill, and he on the other, and, soon after, in the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi; but

that it was penned upon any of those occasions we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers and praises, and professions of confidence in God, all which do well together, and are helpful to one another. I. David professeth his cheerful confidence in God, and, in that confidence, prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, v. 1. . 8. II. He complains of the very deplorable condition he was in, and in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, v. 9. . 18. III. He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, v. 19. . 24.

To the chief musician. A Psalm of David.

1. **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust. **I** let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. 2. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. 3. For thou art my rock and my fortress: therefore, for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me. 4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for thou art my strength. 5. Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. 6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. 7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; 8. And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes, let him pray; *I believe, therefore have I spoken*: and he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here.

I. David, in distress, is very earnest with God in prayer, for succour and relief. This eases a burdened spirit, fetches in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul, in the expectation of them. He prays, 1. That God would deliver him, (v. 1.) that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him. That God, not only in mercy, but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous Judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors; that he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, v. 2. It is condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men; he humbles himself to do it. The psalmist prays also that he would deliver him speedily, lest, if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail. 2. That if he did not immediately deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles; "*Be thou my strong Rock*, immovable, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my House of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me." Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, Prov. xviii. 10. 3. That, his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty, and in respect of providence, he might be under the divine guidance; "*Lord, lead me and guide me*; (v. 3.) so order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable, against my conscience; or unwise and indiscreet, against my interest." They that resolve to follow God's direction, may in faith pray for it. 4. That,

his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him; (v. 4.) "*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me, and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in.*"

II. In this prayer, he gives glory to God, by a repeated profession of his confidence in him, and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers, and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for; (v. 1.) "*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; let me never be ashamed, let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me, and which therefore I have promised myself in thee.*"

1. He had chosen God for his Protector, and God had, by his promise, undertaken to be so; (v. 3.) "*Thou art my Rock and my Fortress, by thy covenant with me, and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore be my strong Rock,*" v. 2. They that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for their's, may expect the benefit of his being so; for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. *Thou art my Strength,* v. 4. If God be our Strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us, and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him; (v. 5.) *Into thine hands I commit my spirit.* (1.) If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God, who gave it, and to whom, at death, the spirit returns. "Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave," xlix. 15. He is willing to die, if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words, our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering, for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught, in our dying moments, to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him; *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* But, (2.) David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And, [1.] His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think that while they are preplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies their care about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls; whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, (2 Cor. iv. 16.) and that we may keep possession of our souls, when we can keep possession of nothing else, Luke xxi. 19. [2.] He thinks the best he can do for his soul is, to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, (v. 4.) to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but, as not insisting upon that, God's will be done, he immediately lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand; "Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul." Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us, solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourages us to commit our spirits into the hand of God, is, that he has not only created, but redeemed them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament church, and the Old Testament saints, were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, Gen. xlviii. 16. The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, if Christ had

not undertaken it; but, by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obliges us to commit them to him as his own, but has showed the extraordinary kindness and concern he has for them, which encourages us to commit them to him, to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom; (2 Tim. i. 12.) "*Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth; redeemed me according to a promise which thou wilt be true to.*"

III. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence; (v. 6.) *I have hated them that regard lying vanities; idolaters, (so some,) who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie; astrologers, and those that give heed to them, so others.* David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations; he consulted not, nor ever took notice of, the flight of birds or entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens; they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did; he trusted in God only, and not in any creature; his interest in the court and country, his retreats or strongholds, even Goliath's sword itself—these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only. See xl. 4. Jer. xvii. 5.

IV. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself, not only easy, but cheerful, with it, v. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God, who cannot find joy enough in that hope to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

V. He encouraged himself in this hope, with the experiences he had had, of late, and formerly, of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered, doth, and will. 1. God had taken notice of his afflictions, and all the circumstances of them; "*Thou hast considered my trouble, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension and compassion regarding the low estate of thy servant.*" 2. He had observed the temper of his spirit, and the workings of his heart under his afflictions; "*Thou hast known my soul in adversities, with a tender concern and care for it.*" God's eye is upon our souls, when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. 3. He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul, when he had him safe enough in Keilah; (1 Sam. xxiii. 7.) "*Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety.*" v. 8. Christ's using these words, (v. 5.) upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him, and (because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of, when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles, and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly. 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. 11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neigh-

bours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me. 12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. 13. For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. 15. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake. 17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses, David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him, and dependence on him; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his own misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

I. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress; (v. 9.) "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble, and need thy mercy.*" The remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints.

1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief, that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, v. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief, and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music, and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural disposition was both cheerful and firm, that he was apt to be cheerful, and not to lay trouble to his heart; yet here we see what he is brought to: he has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance; God can find out ways to make them melancholy, if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

2. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind; (v. 10.) *My strength fails, my bones are consumed, and all because of mine iniquity.* As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness: but as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesses his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities.

3. His friends were unkind, and became shy of him; he was a fear to his acquaintance, when they saw him, they fled from him, v. 11. They durst not harbour him, nor give him any assistance, nor show him any countenance, not so much as to be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now that Saul had proclaimed him a traitor, and out-lawed him. They saw how dear Abimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear

for him. He was forgotten by them, as a dead man out of mind, (v. 12.) and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel. They that showed him all possible respect, when he was in honour at court, now that he was fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow-friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side, not think it strange, if they be thus deserted, but make sure a Friend in heaven, that will not fail them, and make use of him.

4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him; they would not have persecuted him as they did, if they had not first represented him as a bad man; he was a *refractor among all his enemies*, but especially among his neighbours, v. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul. Thus he had the slander of many; every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was on every side; they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David, was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been ranked with the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

5. His life was aimed at, and he went in continual peril of it. That fear was on every side, and he knew that, whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life, (v. 13.) a life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited. Thus, in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life; such are the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

II. His confidence in God, in the midst of these troubles; every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair; "*But I trusted in thee, O Lord, (v. 14.)* and that kept me from sinking." His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God, and pleaded them with him; 1. "*Thou art my God; I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine;*" and if he be ours, and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. "*Thou art my God; and therefore to whom shall I go for relief, but to thee?*" They need not be straitened in their prayers, who can plead this; for if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us, which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement. 2. *My times are in thy hand.* Join this with the former, and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us; and if he be our God, he will help us; and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand; and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, v. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, imbitter or sweeten, as he pleases, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, all events that concern us, and the timing of them, these are at God's disposal; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's; *every man's judgment precedeth from him.* David does not, in his prayers, prescribe to God, but subscribe to him; "*Lord, my*

times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand; thy will be done."

III. His petitions to God; in this faith and confidence,

1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies, (v. 15.) and save him; (v. 16.) and this, for his mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our *opportunities* are in God's hand, (so some read it,) and therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, "*This is the time in which God will deliver thee,*" 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. "No," says David, "the time is not come for my deliverance, till it can be wrought without sin; and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time."

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time; (v. 16.) "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;* let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs."

3. That his prayers to God might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished; (v. 17.) "*Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers, for I have called upon thee,* who never saidst to thy people, Seek in vain, and hope in vain."

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down, and ruin him. "Lord," says he, "let them be made ashamed of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations." As those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were *much cast down in their own eyes*, Neh. vi. 16. *Let them be silent in the grave.* Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave, the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for, that is, he prophesies, the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God; (v. 18.) *Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.* This is a very good prayer; (1.) Which we have often occasion to put up to God; for they that set their mouth against the heavens, commonly revile the heirs of heaven. Religion, and the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against, [1.] With a great deal of malice; they speak *grievous things*, on purpose to vex them, and hoping, with what they say, to do them a real mischief. They speak *hard things*, (so the word is,) which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. [2.] With a great deal of falsehood; they are *lying lips*, taught by the father of lies, and serving his interest. [3.] With a great deal of scorn and disdain; they speak *proudly and contemptuously*, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it may but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. *Hear, O our God, for we are despised.* (2.) We may pray it in faith: for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinces the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming, when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of

all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people, and will execute judgment upon them, Jude 14, 15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it; engaging ourselves likewise, by well-doing, if possible, to *silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

19. *Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee— which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!* 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. 21. Blessed be the LORD; for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. 22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto thee. 23. O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

We have three things in these verses:

I. The believing acknowledgement which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, v. 19, 20.

1. God is good to all, but he is, in a special manner, good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be, to eternity, matter of admiration; *Oh how great is thy goodness!* How profound are the counsels of it; how rich are the treasures of it; how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders, God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness, are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, as stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be *laid up for them, and wrought for them.* (1.) There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance *reserved in heaven*; (1 Pet. i. 4.) and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness, both for the portion and inheritance of all his children, when they come to their full age, and for their maintenance and education, during their minority. There is enough in bank, and enough in hand. (2.) This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought, in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him—that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant, be not wrought for us, it is our own fault; because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms, so they have the credit of it, (and the credit of an estate goes far with some,) it is wrought for them *before the sons of men*; God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them, and rolls away their reproach; *for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed*, Isa. lxi. 9.

2. God preserves man and beast; but he is, in a special manner, the Protector of his own people; (v. 20.)

Thou shalt hide them. As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, (1.) The danger they are in, which arises from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult over them, and would trample on them, and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them, and, when tongues are at strife, good people often go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues, in perverse disputings, endangers truth. But, (2.) See the defence they are under; *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence; in a pavilion.* God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies. He has many ways of sheltering them; when Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for, *the Lord hid them*, Jer. xxxvi. 26. God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful; his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation; and the mansions in his house above, shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding place from all danger and fear.

II. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, (v. 21, 22.) Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

1. Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life; "*He has showed me his marvellous loving kindness*, he has given me an instance of his care of me, and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected." God's loving-kindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are, in a special manner, marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul, in caves and woods, as safe as if it had been in a strong city. In Keilah, that strong city, God showed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines, and then in rescuing him from the same men, who would have ungratefully delivered him up into the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 5, 12. This was marvellous loving kindness indeed, upon which he writes, with wonder and thankfulness, *Blessed be the Lord*. Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings.

2. Within were fears; but God was better to him than his fears, v. 22. He here keeps an account, (1.) Of his own folly, in distrusting God, which he acknowledges to his shame; though he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him, in many straits, yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face, "*I am cut off from before thine eyes*; thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on," 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. This he said, in his *flight*, (so some read it,) which denotes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *in my haste*, (so we read it,) which denotes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste, and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God. (2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding; though his faith failed,

God's promise did not; *Thou heardest the voice of my supplication*, for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God, he might justly have taken us at our word, and brought our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, Num. xiv. 28. Isa. lxvi. 4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect; for he knows our frame.

III. The exhortation and encouragement which he, hereupon, gives to all the saints, v. 23, 24.

1. He would have them set their love on God; (v. 23.) *O love the Lord, all ye his saints*. Those that have their own hearts full of love to God, cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints, that they do love God; and yet they must be still called upon to love him, to love him more, and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him, not only for his goodness, because he preserves the faithful, but for his justice, because he plentifully rewards the proud doer, (who would ruin those whom he preserves,) according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense; he plentifully rewards the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewards him that does well, but plentifully rewards him that does excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God; (v. 24.) "Be of good courage; have a good heart on it, whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart." They that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for, as nothing truly evil can befall them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this, we should animate ourselves, and one another, to proceed and persevere in our Christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

PSALM XXXII.

This psalm, though it speaks not of Christ, as many of the psalms hitherto we have met with have done, has yet a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle tells us, that David, in this psalm, describes the *blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works*, Rom. iv. 6. We have here a summary, I. Of gospel-grace in the pardon of sin; (v. 1, 2.) in divine protection; (v. 7.) and divine guidance, v. 8. II. Of gospel-duty. To confess sin; (v. 3...5.) to pray; (v. 6.) to govern ourselves well; (v. 9, 10.) and to rejoice in God, v. 11. The way to obtain these privileges, is, to make conscience of these duties, which we ought to think of; of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickening, when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to be sung on the day of atonement.

A psalm of David, Maschil.

1. **B**LESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old: through my roaring all the day long. 4. (For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me) my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;

and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

This psalm is entitled *Maschil*, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set, and was to be sung. But others think it is significant; our margin reads it, *A psalm of David giving instruction*; and there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists, and the way that leads to it—what we must do, that we may be happy. There are divers things in which these verses instruct us. In general, we are here taught, that our happiness consists in the favour and grace of God, and not in the wealth of this world; in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world. When David says, (i. 1.) *Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly*, and, (cxix. 1.) *Blessed are the undefiled in the way*; the meaning is, “This is the character of the blessed man; and he that has not this character, cannot expect to be happy;” but when it is here said, *Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven*, the meaning is, “This is the ground of his blessedness; this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow.”

In particular, we are here instructed,

I. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin; this is that which we all need, and are undone without; we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it. 1. It is the forgiving of transgression. *Sin is the transgression of the law*; upon our repentance, the transgression is forgiven; the obligation to punishment, which we lay under, by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is lifted off, (so some read it,) that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a burthen, a heavy burthen, like a load on the back, that makes us stoop, or a load on the stomach, that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits, that makes us sink. The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were *weary and heavy-laden*. Matth. xi. 28. 2. It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, Rev. iii. 18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents, was, blushing at their own nakedness. Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for communion with him, and when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve, (an emblem of the remission of sins,) so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us; no, *My sin is ever before me*, nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice: when he pardons sin, he *remembers it no more*, he *casts it behind his back, it shall be sought for, and not found*. The sinner, being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. 3. It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it, according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we being made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and made him sin for us. Observe, Not to impute iniquity, is God's act, for he is the Judge. *It is God that justifies*.

II. Concerning the character of those whose sins

are pardoned, *in whose spirit there is no guile*; he does not say, “There is no *guilt*,” (for who is there that lives, and sins not?) but no *guile*; that does not dissemble with God, in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon; but, in all these, is sincere, and means as he says; that does not repent, with a purpose to sin again, and then sin, with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glosses upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, those are the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

III. Concerning the happiness of a justified state; *Blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is forgiven*, all manner of blessings, sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse, and obstructed the blessing; and then God will pour out blessings, till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin, is that article of the covenant, which is the reason and ground of all the rest; *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, Heb. viii. 12.

IV. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an unhumiliated sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically, from his own sad experience; (v. 3, 4.) *While I kept silence, my bones waxed old*. Those may be said to keep silence, who stifle their convictions, who, when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it, and diverting their minds to something else; as Cain to the building of a city; who *cry not when God binds them*; who will not unburthen their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer; and who choose rather to pine away in their iniquities, than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls; let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin, not opened, will fester, and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be seared, the case is so much the more dangerous; but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard. The hand of divine wrath will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to that degree David experienced it, so that when he was young, his bones waxed old; and even his silence made him roar all the day long, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body; when really the cause of all his uneasiness, was, the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his convictions and his corruptions. Note, *He that covers his sin shall not prosper*; some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

V. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience. We are here taught to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven; to declare them, that we may be justified. This course David took; *I acknowledged my sin unto thee* and no longer hid mine iniquity, v. 5. Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins, must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it; *Thus, and thus have I done*; confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay a load upon ourselves for it; *I have done very wickedly*; confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it; *The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us*; and that we deserve much worse; *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*. We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

VI. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it; “*I said, I will confess*;

I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer, but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins; and immediately *thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*, and gavest me the comfort of the pardon in mine own conscience; immediately I found rest to my soul." Note, God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent, in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado, that David was here brought to confess his sins; he was put to the rack before he was brought to it; (v. 3, 4.) he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly how easily, he obtained good terms; I did but say, *I will confess*, and thou forgavest." Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son *when he was yet afar off*, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents; and what an assurance does it give us, that, *if we confess our sins*, we shall find God, not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind, to *forgive us our sins!*

VII. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins; (v. 6.) *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee.* Note, 1. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Acts ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. 2. The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, *God be merciful to us sinners.* For this, shall every one that is well-inclined, be earnest with God in prayer, and *come boldly to the throne of grace*, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb. iv. 16. 3. Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found. When, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and by his Spirit he stirs them up to seek him, they must go *speedily to seek the Lord*, (Zech. viii. 21.) and lose no time, lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, Isa. lv. 6. *Behold now is the accepted time*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. 4. Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer, will find the benefit of it, when they are in trouble; *Surely in the floods of great waters*, which are very threatening, *they shall not come nigh them*, to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness, much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God *nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for*, as all upright, penitent, praying, people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters, no not great waters, no not floods of them, can come nigh them, to hurt them. As the temptations of the *wicked one touch them not*, (1 John v. 18.) so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts, of both kinds, drop short of them.

7. *Thou art my hiding-place*; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. 9. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. 10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. 11.

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

I. He speaks to God, and professes his confidence in him, and expectation from him; (v. 7.) having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint, and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. 1. Safety; "*Thou art my Hiding-Place*; when by faith I have recourse to thee, I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble*, from the sting of it, and from the strokes of it, as far as is good for me. *Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in, while I kept silence*," v. 3. When God has pardoned our sins, if he leave us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever, and plunge ourselves again into the same gulf; and therefore, when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God, to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. God keeps his people from trouble, by keeping them from sin. 2. Joy; "*Thou shalt not only deliver me, but compass me about with songs of deliverance*; which way soever I look, I shall see occasion to rejoice, and to praise God; and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: they shall join their songs of deliverance with mine; as every one that is godly shall pray with me, so they shall give thanks with me."

II. He turns his speech to the children of men; being himself converted, he does what he can to *strengthen his brethren*, (Luke xxii. 32. v. 8.) *I will instruct thee*, whoever thou art that desirest instruction, and *teach thee in the way which thou shalt go*. Thus, in another of his penitential psalms, he resolves that, when God had restored to him the joy of his salvation, he would teach transgressors his ways, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted, li. 12, 13. When Solomon became a penitent, he immediately became a preacher, Eccl. i. 1. Those are best able to teach others the grace of God, who have themselves had the experience of it: and those who are themselves taught of God, ought to tell others what he has done for their souls, (lxvi. 16.) and so teach them. *I will guide thee with mine eye*. Some apply it to God's conduct and direction. He teaches us by his word, and guides us with his eye, by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of Providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from; as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye. When Christ turned and looked upon Peter, he guided him with his eye. But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially; "*I will counsel thee, mine eyes shall be upon thee*," (so the margin reads it,) "*I will give thee the best counsel I can*, and then observe whether thou takest it or no." Those that are taught in the word, should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them; spiritual guides must be overseers.

In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned, here is a word to sinners, and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each their portion.

1. Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a

good reason given for it. (1.) The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernable; (v. 9.) *Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding.* When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repented of, he compared himself to a beast before God; so foolish have I been and ignorant, (lxxiii. 22.) and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness, that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near us, to do us a mischief, or (as some read it) that they may come near to us, to do us service, that they may obey us, Jam. iii. 3. Let us not be like them; let us not be hurried by appetite and passion, at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason, and to our true interest. If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become saints, and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace, there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. (2.) The reason for this caution, is, because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake, will certainly end in sorrow; (v. 10.) *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked*, which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dear for it. Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, *I will greatly multiply thy sorrows.* "Be wise for yourselves, therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows."

2. Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason given for that too. (1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, *mercy shall compass them about on every side*, (v. 10.) so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. (2.) They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, to that degree, as even to *shout for joy*, v. 11. Let them be so transported with this holy joy, as not to be able to contain themselves: and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live, in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they only, are entitled to, and qualified for.

PSALM XXXIII.

This is a psalm of praise; it is probable that David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penmen of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist, in this psalm, I. Calls upon the righteous to praise God, v. 1. . . 3. II. Furnishes us with matter for praise. We must praise God, 1. For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, v. 4. 5. 2. For his power appearing in the work of creation, v. 6. . 9. 3. For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, (v. 10, 11.) and again, v. 13. . 17. 4. For the peculiar favour which he bears to his own chosen people, which encourages them to trust in him, (v. 12.) and again, v. 18. . 22. We need not be at a loss for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally speaks the pious affections of a devout soul toward God.

1. **R**EJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. 2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings. 3. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud

noise: 4. For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. 5. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses. 8. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: 9. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresses in these verses.

I. The great desire he had that God might be praised: he did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work; the more the better in this concert, it is the more like heaven. 1. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people; (v. 1.) *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*, so the foregoing psalm concluded, and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of beings, and best of friends. 2. Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us; (v. 2.) *"Praise the Lord; speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name."* 3. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required; (v. 3.) *"Sing unto him a new song*, the best you have, not that which, by frequent use, is worn thread-bare; but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections; a new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning." Music was then used, by the appointment of David, with the temple songs, that they might be the better sung: and this also is here called for; (v. 2.) *Sing unto him with the psaltery.* Here is, (1.) A good rule for this duty; "Do it skilfully, and with a loud noise; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and with a clear head; affectionately, and with a warm heart." (2.) A good reason for this duty; *for praise is comely for the upright.* It is well-pleasing to God; the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people; and it is an excellent ornament to our profession; *it becomes the upright*, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him. The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory. Whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like a *parable in the mouth of fools*, Prov. xxvi. 7.

II. The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, v. 4, 5. God makes himself known to us, 1. In his word; here put for all divine revelation, all that which God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the children of men; and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it: his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises all are wise and good, and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but

even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. 2. In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the *scriptures of truth*, Dan. x. 21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works, (1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice. He *loveth righteousness and judgment*. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passes, and judgment in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness. (2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty; *the earth is full of his goodness*, that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce; the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly speak that *the earth is full of his goodness*; the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted: what pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises; and that, of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory!

III. The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We believe in God, and therefore we praise him as the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, so we are here taught to praise him.

Observe, 1. How God made the world, and brought all things into being. (1.) How easily: All things were made *by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth*; Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the Breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it, and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. He spake, and he commanded, (v. 9.) and that was enough, there needed no more. With men, saying and doing are two things, but it is not so with God; by the Word and Spirit of God, as the world was made, so was man, that little world: God said, "Let us make man," and he breathed into him the breath of life. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that Power do, which, with a word, made a world? (2.) How effectually it was done; and it stood fast. What God does, he does to purpose; he does it, and it *stands fast*, v. 9. *Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever*, Eccl. iii. 14. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast, that they *continue to this day according to God's ordinance*, cxix. 91.

2. What he made: He made all things, but notice is here taken, (1.) *Of the heavens, and the host of them*, v. 6. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts; the highest heavens, and the angels their hosts. (2.) *Of the waters, and the treasures of them*, v. 7. The earth was at first covered with the water, and, being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it; but to show, from the very first, that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers, with a word's speaking, *he gathered the waters together on a heap*, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but *laid up the depth in store-houses*; not only in the flats where the seas make

their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in store-houses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hid from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a store-house for that day when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

3. What use is to be made of this, v. 8. *Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him*, that is, let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him, xcv. 5, 6. The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Let us all fear him, that is, dread his wrath, and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy, and standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him, who, having this power, no doubt, has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him, who has the host of heaven for his armies, and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see Jer. v. 22.

IV. The satisfaction he had in God's sovereignty and dominion, v. 10, 11. He overrules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see, with an eye of faith, God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies. *He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves a *vain thing*; (ii. 1.) the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness. Haman's plot baffled; though the design be laid never so deep, and the hopes raised upon it never so high, yet, if God says *it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass*, it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees; *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*. It is immutable in itself, *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled; nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its times. With what pleasure to ourselves may we, in singing this, give praise to God! How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust.

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13. The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. A horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength. 18. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and

our shield. 21. For our heart shall rejoice in him; because we have trusted in his holy name. 22. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give to God the glory,

I. Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Though he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

1. The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so; and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, *v. 13, 14.* Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholds them, but he *looks upon them*, he looks narrowly upon them, (so the word here used is sometimes rendered,) so narrowly, that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think, that, because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world; but from thence, high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things are naked and open before him.

2. Their hearts, as well as their times, are all in his hand; *He fashions their hearts.* He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called *the Father of Spirits*: and this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them; the artist that made the clock can account for the motions of every wheel. David uses this argument, with application to himself, *cxxxix. 1, 14.* He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens men's understandings, stiffens or bows their wills, according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions men's hearts fashions them alike; it is in hearts as in faces, though there is a great difference, and such a variety, as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, that, in some things, all faces and all hearts agree, *as in water face answers to face, Prov. xxvii.*

19. *He fashions them together;* (so some read it;) as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, are yet all put together, to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other, and seeming to contradict one another, are yet all overruled, to serve the divine purpose, which is one.

3. They, and all they do, are subject to his judgment; *for he considers all their works*, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world, of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity.

4. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, *v. 16, 17.* It is much for the honour of God, that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him, but that no force can act but in dependence on him, and by a power derived from him.

(1.) The strength of a king is nothing without God; no king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested; for the powers that are of that kind are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and

yet acknowledged God only to be his Protector and Saviour.

(2.) The strength of an army is nothing without God. The multitude of a host cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory; for, when God pleases, one shall chase a thousand.

(3.) The strength of a giant is nothing without God; a mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength, when his day comes to fall; neither the firmness or activity of his body, nor the stoutness or resolution of his mind, will stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on, in his strength.

(4.) The strength of a horse is nothing without God; (*v. 17.*) *A horse is a vain thing for safety.* In war, horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to *multiply horses*, (*Deut. xvii. 16.*) lest they should be tempted to trust to them, and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians; (*2 Sam. viii. 4.*) here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly, and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger, instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

II. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounces those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while they were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their God, which was so far from being able to hear and help them, that it was itself senseless and helpless; (*v. 12.*) *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord*, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God, and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs, and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. 1. It is their wisdom, that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due, and where the payment of it will not be in vain. 2. It is their happiness, that they are the people whom God has chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man does his inheritance, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* Now let us observe here, to the honour of divine grace,

(1.) The regard which God has to his people, *v. 18, 19.* God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, *Isa. lxiii. 5.* While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people, under his protection, are safe, for he shall deliver their soul from death, when there seems to be but a step between them and it; if he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death; their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world, or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessities—he shall keep them alive in

famine; when others die for want, they shall live, which makes it a distinguishing mercy. When visible means fail, God will find out some way or other to supply them. He does not say that he will give them abundance, (they have no reason either to desire it, or to expect it,) but he will keep them alive, they shall not starve; and when destroying judgments are abroad, it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very striking one, and lays us under peculiar obligations, to have our lives given us for a prey. They that have the Lord for their God, shall find him their Help and their Shield, v. 20. In their difficulties he will assist them, they shall be helped over them, helped through them; in their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage.

(2.) The regard which God's people have to him, and which we all ought to have, in consideration of this.

[1.] We must wait for God; we must attend the motions of his providence, and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him; (v. 20.) we must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him.

[2.] We must rely on God; hope in his mercy, in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. They that fear God and his wrath must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriending each other; a holy fear of God, and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is *trusting in his holy name*, (v. 21.) in all that whereby he has made known himself to us, for our encouragement to serve him.

[3.] We must *rejoice in God*, v. 21. Those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times; because they that hope in God hope for an eternal fulness of joy in his presence.

[4.] We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, v. 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short, but comprehensive, prayer, "*Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us*"; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but according as we hope in thee, according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us, and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us." If, in singing these verses, we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

PSALM XXXIV.

This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title, and yet there is little in it peculiar to that occasion, but that which is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God, and instruction to us. I. He praises God for the experience which he and others had had of his goodness, v. 1. - 6. II. He encourages all good people to trust in God, and to seek to him, v. 7. - 10. III. He gives good counsel to us all, as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make conscience of our duty both to God and man, v. 11. - 14. IV. To enforce this good counsel, he shows God's favour to the righteous, and his displeasure against the wicked, in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, v. 15. - 22. So that, in singing this psalm, we are both to give glory to God, and to teach and admonish ourselves and one another.

A psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

1. **I** WILL bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually be in my mouth. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad. 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. 6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it, and upon what occasion it was penned. David, being forced, by the rage of Saul, to leave his country, sought for shelter as near as he could, in the land of the Philistines; there it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who, in the narrative, is called *Achish*, his proper name, here, *Abimelech*, his title; and, lest he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a madman, (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason,) that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now, 1. We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a madman. If, in sport, we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours. 2. Yet we cannot but wonder at the composure of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that, when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which has as much in it of the marks of a calm sedate spirit as any psalm in all the book; and there is something curious too in the composition, for it is what is called an alphabetical psalm, that is, a psalm in which every verse begins with each letter in its order, as it stands in the Hebrew alphabet. Happy they who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour.

In this former part of the psalm, I. David engages and excites himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater, in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves, 1. That he will praise

God constantly; *I will bless the Lord at all times, upon all occasions.* He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty; to lay hold on all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnished him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit that we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. 2. That he will praise him openly; *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* Thus he would show how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God, and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. 3. That he will praise him heartily; *"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord,* in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him." It is not vain glory to glory in the Lord.

II. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will; (v. 2) *"the humble shall hear thereof,* both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour showed him, and a good God so much honour done him." Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite.

Three things he would have us all to concur with him in.

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him, and exalting his name, v. 3. We cannot make God greater or higher than he is; but, if we adore him as infinitely great, and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert, for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. They that share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies, as in praying for them.

We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

(1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of, for he never said to any of them, *Seek ye me, in vain.* [1.] David, for his part, will give it under his hand, that he has found him a prayer-hearing God; (v. 4.) *"I sought the Lord* in my distress, entreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request immediately, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared, and from the disquietude and disturbance produced by my fear of it." The former he does by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears, and still the tumult of the spirits; this latter is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only: but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin; nay, it is often more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits, and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with great composure wait the event. "But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer?" Yes, [2.] Many beside him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, v. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them; witness Hannah, who, when she had prayed, *went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.* When we look to the world, we are darkened, we are perplexed, and at a loss; but when we look to God, from him we have the light both of

direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them, their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. But, perhaps, these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and, upon that account, were highly favoured; or their numbers made them considerable; nay, [3.] This poor man cried, a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern; yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David, or any of his worthies; the Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and *saved him out of all his troubles,* v. 6. *God will regard the prayer of the destitute,* cii. 17. See Isa. lvii. 15.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us; (v. 7.) *The angel of the Lord,* a guard of angels, (so some,) but as unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, encamps round about them that fear God, as the life-guard about the prince, and delivers them. God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits; for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits; and the holy angels do us more good offices, every day, than we are aware of. Though in dignity and in capacity of nature they are very much superior to us, though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost, though they have constant employment in the upper world, the employment of praising God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there, yet, in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's, (Gen. xxxii. 1.) and Elisha's, 2 Kings, vi. 17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God; (v. 8.) *O taste, and see, that the Lord is good.* The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of his being, and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and, accordingly, (1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful Benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the savour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) We must see that he is a beautiful Being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries, and take complacency; taste, and see, God's goodness; take notice of it, and take the comfort of it, 1 Pet. ii. 3. He is good, for he makes all those truly blessed that trust in him; let us, therefore, be so convinced of his goodness, as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear; (v. 9.) *O fear the Lord, ye his saints;* when we taste and see that he is good, we must not forget that he is great, and greatly to be feared; nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,* Hos. iii. 5. *Fear the Lord;* worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing; not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him, (v. 10.) as a people seek unto their God; apply yourselves to him, and portion yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, shall *want no good thing.* Heb. *They shall not want all good*

things; they shall so have of all good things, that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Ps. lxxxiv. 11. And as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God; as a Father, he will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire, they shall have, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them, he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it, Deut. iii. 26. Paul had all, and abounded, because he was content, Phil. iv. 11, 18. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency, want nothing; for in him they have enough. The young lions often lack, and suffer hunger; and they that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which they have that live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want, for bread is not always to the wise; but verily they shall be fed that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous, and prey upon all about them, shall want, but *the meek shall inherit the earth*; they shall not want, who with quietness work, and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau, the cunning hunter, is ready to perish for hunger.

11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12. What man *is he that desireth life, and loveth many days*, that he may see good? 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. *The righteous cry*, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18. The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19. Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David, in this latter part of the psalm, undertakes to teach children; though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people, from his own experience. It does not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least, any that were grown up to a capacity of being taught; but, by divine inspiration, he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had offered them his

service; (xxxii. 8.) but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent, and that children and young people will be more tractable; and therefore he calls together a congregation of them; (v. 11.) "Come, ye children, that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days; ye children, that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught." Perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them; and it is as great a piece of charity to put those children to school whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them, as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, 1. What he expects from them; "*Hearken unto me*, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me." 2. What he undertakes to teach them—*The fear of the Lord*, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier; but he does not say to the children, "I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or to draw the bow; or, I will teach you the maxims of state-policy;" but, I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all the arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.

1. He supposes that we all aim to be happy; (v. 12.) *What man is he that desireth life?* that is, (as it follows,) not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days; *non est vivere, sed valere, vita*—It is not our being, but our well-being, that is entitled to the name of life. It is asked, "Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?" And it is easily answered, *Who does not?* Surely this must look further than time and this present world; for man's life on earth, at best, consists but of few days, and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy; that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy; who would see that good before him now, by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? Alas, very few have that in their thoughts; most ask, *Who will show us any good?* But few ask, *What shall we do to inherit eternal life?* This question implies that there are some such.

II. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, v. 13, 14. Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience; and, in order to that, 1. We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say; that we never speak amiss, to God's dishonour, or our neighbour's prejudice; *Keep thy tongue from evil speaking*, lying and slandering. So great a way does this go in religion, that, *if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*; and so little a way does religion go without this, that it is said, respecting him who *bridles not his tongue, His religion is vain*. 2. We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double-tongued; our words must be the indications of our minds; our lips must be kept from speaking guile either to God or man. 3. We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. We must depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. 4. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good; good for

ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. 5. Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which bring confusion and every evil work; we must seek peace and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace, and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; *follow peace with all men*, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honour and interest, for peace-sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good, are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our gospel-duty, 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11. And perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin, in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

III. He enforces these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life, and live. See Isa. iii. 10, 11.

1. *Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*, however they may bless themselves in their own way.

(1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable; sad is the case of that man who, by his sin, has made his Maker his Enemy, his Destroyer. *The face of the Lord is against them that do evil*, v. 16. Sometimes God is said to *turn his face from them*, (Jer. xviii. 17.) because they have forsaken him; here he is said to *set his face against them*, because they have fought against him; and, most certainly, God is able to out-face the most proud and daring sinners, and can frown them into hell.

(2.) *Ruin is before them*; this will follow, of course, if God be against them, for he is able both to kill, and to cast into hell. [1.] The land of the living shall be no place for them or theirs. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but *cut off the remembrance of them*; when they are alive, shall bury them in obscurity, when they are dead, shall bury them in oblivion. He shall root out their posterity, by whom they would be remembered; he shall pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in, and for which they thought they should have been remembered. It is certain that there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. [2.] There shall be a sting in their death; *Evil shall slay the wicked*, v. 21. Their death shall be miserable; so it will certainly be, though they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. Death, to them, has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is evil, only evil. It is very well observed by Dr. Hammond, that the evil here, which slays the wicked, is the same word, in the singular number, that is used, (v. 19.) for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles; and yet they do them no hurt, but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all: whereas, wicked people have fewer troubles; fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble, with a curse in it, kills and slays, and does execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, gainful.

[3.] Desolation will be their everlasting portion; they that are wicked themselves, often hate the righteous, name and thing, have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever, shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God, and all good angels, and men; and these that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet, *say to the righteous, it shall be well with them*; all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of that, under a great variety of instances and expressions.

(1.) God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him, and who make conscience of their duty to him; *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous*, (v. 15.) to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

(2.) They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which denotes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes, [1.] God takes notice of what we say; (v. 17.) *They cry, and the Lord hears them*, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. *His ears are open to their prayers*, to receive them all, and to receive them readily and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming, in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of; *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*, v. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. [2.] He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to hear us for our relief; (v. 18.) *He is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saves them*. Note, First, It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. Secondly, Those who are so have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken, more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See Isa. lvii. 15. Though God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those, who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burthens; he is near them to good purpose.

(3.) They are taken under the special protection of the divine government; (v. 20.) *He keepeth all his bones*; not only his soul, but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it, *not one of them is broken*. He that has a broken heart, shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found, that, when he had a contrite heart, the *broken bones were made to rejoice*, li. 8, 17. One would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him, (John xix. 36.) when the soldiers brake the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise, as well as of the type, even the paschal-lamb, *a bone of him shall not be broken*; the promises being made good to Christ, through him, are sure to all the seed. It does not

follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is often wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise; if he have a broken bone, sooner or later it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power.

(4.) They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles. [1.] It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God, and to the example of Christ; (v. 19.) *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, witness David and his afflictions, cxxxii. 1. There are those that hate them, (v. 21.) and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them, and therefore corrects them, so that, between the mercy of Heaven, and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. [2.] God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation; *He delivers them out of their troubles*; (v. 17, 19.) he saves them, (v. 18.) so that, though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, v. 22. Whatever troubles befall them, *First*, They shall not hurt their better part. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants* from the power of the grave, (xlix. 15.) and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. *Secondly*, They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss; *none of them that trust in him shall be desolate*; they shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate, but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him, and, in doing so, trust him to protect and reward them, and, with good thoughts of him, refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy, whatever befalls them, for they are safe, and shall be happy.

In singing these verses, let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

PSALM XXXV.

David, in this psalm, appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, against his enemies, that hated and persecuted him. It is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles. I. He complains to God of the injuries they did him; they strove with him, fought against him, (v. 1.) persecuted him, (v. 3.) sought his ruin, (v. 4, 7.) accused him falsely, (v. 11.) abused him falsely, (v. 15, 16.) and all his friends, (v. 20.) and triumphed over him, v. 21, 25, 26. II. He pleads his own innocence, that he never gave them any provocation, (v. 7, 19.) but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, v. 12, 14. III. He prays to God to protect and deliver him; and appear for him; (v. 1, 2.) to comfort him; (v. 3.) to be nigh to him, and rescue him; (v. 17, 22.) to plead his cause; (v. 23, 24.) to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him; (v. 3, 4.) to disappoint their expectations of his fall; (v. 19, 25, 26.) and, lastly, to countenance all his friends, and encourage them, v. 27. IV. He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, v. 4, 6, 8. V. He promises himself that he shall yet see better days; (v. 9, 10.) and promises God that he will then attend him with his praises, v. 18, 28. In singing this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our

own, and of expressing by it any uncharitable revengeful resentments of injuries done to us; for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies, and not to pray against them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, 1. We may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our consciences, concerning our innocency, with reference to those that are any way injurious to us, and with hopes that God will, in his own way, and time, right us, and, in the mean time, support us. 2. We ought to apply it to the public enemies of Christ, and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour, to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of Christianity and serious godliness, and to believe that God will, in due time, glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church, that will not repent, to give him glory.

A Psalm of David.

1. **P**LEAD *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. 3. Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation. 4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*. 6. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. 7. For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul. 8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10. All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

In these verses, we have,

1. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors; he was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his guidance, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St. Paul speaks) *in all good conscience before God unto this day*; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him; they fought against him, (v. 1.) not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, *sought after his soul*, (v. 4.) that is, his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit, and put that into disorder; nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but inveterate malice; they devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it; they

hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey, they digged a pit for him, and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, *v. 7.* They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit, (*vii. 15.*) and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtlety, they hid their net from David and his friends; but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And, *lastly*, he found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him, (*v. 10.*) for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin, in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way; such was the manner of the king, and all about him were compelled to do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand; he has fields, and vineyards, and preferences, at his disposal, *1 Sam. xxii. 7.* But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part, but men (as we say) of broken fortunes; (*1 Sam. xxii. 2.*) and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got, and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies: Christ himself is striven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed; and we are not to marvel at the matter, it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent, against the seed of the woman.

II. His appeal to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. If a fellow-subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Cæsar; but when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is Prince and Judge of the kings of the earth; *Plead my cause, O Lord, v. 1.* Note, A righteous cause may, with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were, without cause, his enemies, and that they had, without cause, digged pits for him, *v. 7.* Note, It will be a comfort to us, when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us, that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul; (*Acts xxv. 10.*) *To the Jews have I done no wrong.* We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us by this, That we never gave them any cause to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more confidently expect that God will plead our cause.

III. His prayer to God to manifest himself both for him, and to him, in this trial. 1. *For him*; he prays that God would fight against his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him; (*v. 1.*) that he would take hold of shield and buckler, for the Lord is a Man of war, (*Exod. xv. 3.*) and that he would stand up for his help, (*v. 2.*) for he had few that would stand up for him, and if he had ever so many, they would stand him in no stead without God: he prays that God would stop their way, that they might not overtake him when he fled from them: this prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them, and stop their way. 2. *To him*; "*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*"; let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my Saviour out of my present troubles, but my everlasting Bliss; let me

have that salvation not only which he is the Author of, but which consists in his favour. And let me know it; let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast." If God, by his Spirit, witness to our spirits, that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more, to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our Friend, no matter who is our enemy.

IV. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge; we find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses, *Sc let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him*; and we cannot suppose that he, that was so meek in his conversation, should give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but, by the spirit of prophecy, he foretells the just judgments of God, that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death, and are not to be prayed for, *Jer. vii. 16.—xi. 14.—xiv. 11. 1 John v. 16.* As for Saul himself, David, it is probable, knew that God had rejected him, and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, *1 Sam. xvi. 1.* And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing *Rom. xi. 9, 10.*

He here prays, 1. Against his many enemies; (*v. 4-6.*) *Let them be confounded, &c.* Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, *They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back.* This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins, and turned back from them; or, if they were not brought to repentance, that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him, and so put to shame. But though they should, in some degree, prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last; they shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God, and so certainly will they be driven away by them, *i. 4.* Their way shall be *dark and slippery, darkness and slipperiness*; (so the margin reads it;) the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness, and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for *their foot shall slide in due time*, *Deut. xxxiii. 35.* But this is not the worst of it; even chaff before the wind, may perhaps be stopped, and find a place of rest, and though the way be dark and slippery, it is possible that a man may keep his footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them, (*v. 5.*) so that they shall find no rest; shall persecute them, (*v. 6.*) so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp about them that fear him, so they encamp against them that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice, as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their Enemy make all the holy angels their enemies. 2. He prays against his one mighty enemy; (*v. 8.*) *Let destruction come upon him.* It is probable that he means Saul, who laid snares for him, and aimed at his destruction. David vowed that his hand should not be upon him, he would not be judge in his own cause; but, at the same time, he foretold that *the Lord would smite him*, (*1 Sam. xxvi. 10.*) and here, that the net he had hid should catch himself, and into *that very destruction he should fall*; which was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul, for he had laid a plot to make David *fall by the hand of the Philistines*, (*1 Sam. xviii. 25.*) that was the net which he hid

for him, under pretence of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines, when his day came to fall.

V. His prospect of his own deliverance, which, having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, *v. 9, 10.* 1. He hoped that he should have the comfort of it; "*My soul shall be joyful, not in mine own ease and safety, but in the Lord, and in his favour, in his promise, and in his salvation, according to the promise.*" Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true solid satisfying joy.

They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, who sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last *enter into the joy of their Lord.* 2. He promised that then God should have the glory of it; (*v. 10.*) *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* (1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body, and are the strength of it. (2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him to be a none-such; *Lord, who is like unto thee?* No such Patron of oppressed innocency, no such Punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously, (*Ecc. xi. 5. Ps. cxxxix. 16.*) the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which, at the resurrection, shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11. False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. 12. They rewarded me evil for good, *to the spoiling of my soul.* 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned unto mine own bosom. 14. I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother. 15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; *yea,* the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me,* and ceased not. 16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very wicked things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them; perjury and ingratitude.

I. Perjury, *v. 11.* When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses which were some treasonable words or overt-acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself, (or if he had it had been all one,) Saul adjudged him a traitor; this he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable; *False witnesses did rise up, who would swear any thing; they laid to my charge things that I knew not, nor ever thought of.* See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst,

against whose false oaths innocency itself is no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge, with thankfulness, the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing, that there is not more mischief done that way than is. This instance of the wrong done to David was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David against whom false witnesses did arise, *Matth. xxvi. 60.* If we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened to us; so persecuted they the prophets, even the great Prophet.

II. Ingratitude. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse; this was the character of David's enemies; (*v. 12.*) *They rewarded me evil for good.* A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and he can no longer dwell in his country. This is *to the spoiling of his soul*; this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart, more than any thing else.

Nay, he had not only deserved well of the public, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably, it was then well known whom he meant, it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon, when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers, it is likely, he had showed his respect, while he lived at court, who now were, of all others, most abusive to him. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful; (*John x. 32.*) *Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those do you stone me?* David here shews,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection, he had carried it toward them in their afflictions; (*v. 13, 14.*) *They were sick.* Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death, and the visitation of sickness. Now, when these people were sick, (1.) David mourned for them, and sympathized with them in their grief. They were not related to him, he was under no obligations to them, he would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps he was a gainer by it; and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, He took on as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death, of our near relations. Those that do not, are justly stigmatized as without natural affection. (2.) He prayed for them; he discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven, were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction; both in his diet, he fasted, at least, from pleasant bread, and in his dress, he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the fervour of it; he was so intent in

his devotions, that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating; "*My prayer returned into mine own bosom*; I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them, nor make them my friends." We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our rejoicing will be this, *the testimony of our conscience*.

2. How basely and insolently, and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish, they had carried it toward him; (v. 15, 16.) *In mine adversity, they rejoiced*. When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were pleased, were glad at his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs, to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite. Well might he call them *objects*, for nothing could be more vile and sordid, than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour, and consummate virtue. But this was not all; (1.) They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him, and fastened upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to. (2.) *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*; they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up, if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment all the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, it was the song of the drunkards, the comedians, who may fitly be called *hypocritical mockers*, (for what does a hypocrite signify, but a stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely, were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and *gnashed upon him with their teeth*; such has often been the hard fate of the best of men. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will, for no other reason, than because he was caressed by the people. It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work, that *for this a man is envied of his neighbour*, Eccl. iv. 4. And *who can stand before envy?* Prov. xxvii. 4.

17. LORD, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. 18. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. 19. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. 20. For they speak not peace; but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are quiet* in the land. 21. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha! our eye hath seen it. 22. *This* thou hast seen, O LORD; keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me. 23. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my LORD. 24. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. 25. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. 26. Let them be ashamed, and brought to confusion toge-

ther, that rejoice at my hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. 27. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause; yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise, all the day long.

In these verses, as before,

I. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence, of his persecutors, pleading this with God, as a reason why he should protect him from them, and appear against them. 1. They were very unrighteous, they were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation; *they hated him without a cause*; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him; (John xv. 25.) *They hated me without a cause*. 2. They were very rude; they could not find in their hearts to show him common civility; they spake not peace; if they met him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of the day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not *speak peaceably to him*, Gen. xxxvii. 4. 3. They were very proud and scornful; (v. 21.) *They opened their mouth wide against me*; they shouted and huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after him, when he was forced to quit the court, "Aha, aha, this is the day we longed to see." 4. They were very barbarous and base, for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and *magnified themselves against him*, v. 26. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odii damnatos*—The Roman crowd, varying their opinions with every turn of fortune, are sure to execrate the fallen. Thus, when the Son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. 5. They set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David; (v. 20.) *They devised deceitful matters, to trepan and ruin them that are quiet in the land*. Note, (1.) It is the character of the godly in the land, that they are the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors, in the Lord, and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, however they have been misrepresented as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces. *am for peace*, cxx. 7. (2.) Though the people or God are, and study to be, a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the hellish arts of malice and falsehood are made use of to render them odious or despicable, their words and actions misconstrued, even that which they abhor fathered upon them, laws made to ensnare them, (Dan. vi. 4, &c.) and all to ruin them and root them out. They that hated David, thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

2. He appeals to God against them, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*; appeals to his knowledge; (v. 22.) *This thou hast seen*. They had falsely accused him, but God, who knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They carried on their plots against him with a great degree of secrecy; (v. 15.) "I knew it not, till long after, when they themselves gloried in it; but thine eye was upon them in their close cabals, and thou art a Witness

of all they have said and done against me and thy people." He appeals to God's justice; *Awake to my judgment, even to my cause*, and let it have a hearing at thy bar; (v. 23.) "*Judge me, O Lord my God*; pass sentence upon this appeal, according to the righteousness of thy nature and government." See this explained by Solomon; (1 Kings viii. 31, 32.) When thou art appealed to, *hear in heaven, and judge, by condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous*.

III. He prays earnestly to God, to appear graciously for him and his friends, against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors.

1. He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator; (v. 17.) "*Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it, and the greater the loss if I lose it; it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger, Lord, rescue it; it does, in a peculiar manner, belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it! Lord, keep not silence, as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! Lord, be not far from me*, (v. 22.) as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for; let not me be beheld afar off, as the proud are."

2. He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice; (v. 19.) *Let them not rejoice over me*; and again; (v. 24.) not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the abjects, but because it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God; it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause. He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger, that they should say in their hearts, *Ah, so would we have it*, (v. 25.) much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity, that they should say, *We have swallowed him up*; for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be *ashamed and brought to confusion together*, (v. 26.) as before, (v. 4.) he desires his innocence might be so cleared, that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed, that they might be ashamed of their designs against him, and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step toward their reformation, or that that might be their portion, which would be their everlasting misery.

3. He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice, and give glory to God; (v. 27.) notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him, there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged, and bore a good affection to him; and he prays for them; (1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good, to see an honest man, and an honest cause, prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, even when they are run down, and trampled upon, shall, in due time, shout for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will, at length, be a victorious cause. (2.) That they might join with him in his praises, let them say continually, *The Lord be*

magnified, by us and others, *who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant*. Note, [1.] The great God has pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he has pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he does not afflict willingly; and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. [2.] When God, in his providence, shows his good-will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it, with thankfulness, to his praise, and to say, *The Lord be magnified*.

Lastly, The mercy he hoped to win by prayer, he promises to wear with praise; "*I will give thee thanks*, as the Author of my deliverance; (v. 18.) *and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness*, the justice of thy judgments, and the equity of all thy dispensations;" and this, 1. Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God; so far was he from being ashamed of them, he will do it in the great congregation, and among much people, that God might be honoured, and many edified. 2. Constantly; he will speak God's praise *every day*, (so it may be read,) *and all the day long*, for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

PSALM XXXVI.

It is uncertain when, and upon what occasion, David penned this psalm, probably when he was struck at, either by Saul, or by Absalom; for in it he complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, I. The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, v. 1.-4. II. The goodness of God, and how gracious he is, v. 1. To all his creatures in general, v. 5, 6. 2. To his own people in a special manner, v. 7.-9. By this, the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, (v. 10.) for himself in particular, and his own preservation, (v. 11.) and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, v. 12. If, in singing this psalm, our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and satisfaction in God's loving kindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord.

I. **T**HE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes*. 2. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and to do good*. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*; he abhorreth not evil.

David, in the title of this psalm, is styled *the servant of the Lord*; why in this, and not in any other, except in xviii. title, no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men, more immediately, and more eminently, than any other in his day. He glories in it, cxvi. 16. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David, in these verses, describes the wickedness of the wicked, whether he means his persecutors in particular or all notorious gross sinners, in gene-

ral, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes, and sin in its colours, in its root, and in its branches.

I. Here is the root of bitterness, from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise,

1. From their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him; (v. 1.) "*The transgression of the wicked*, (as it is described afterward, v. 3, 4.) *saith within my heart*, makes me to conclude within myself, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes*, for if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he does; he would not, he durst not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty, or dread of his wrath." Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law, that the criminal, not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety. David concluding, concerning those who lived at large, that they lived without God in the world.

2. From their conceit of themselves, and a cheat they fully put upon their own souls; (v. 2.) *He flattereth himself in his own eyes*; while he goes on in sin, he thinks he does wisely and well for himself, and either does not see, or will not own, the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good, and good evil: his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passes for his prudence and policy: and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself, is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he does, he says, *God will not require it, I shall have peace though I go on*. Note, Sinners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers; Satan could not deceive them, if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? No, the day is coming, when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so; he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, because of the secular profit, and sensual pleasure, which may attend it; yet *the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps*; (Job xx. 13, 14.) when their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, and makes them a terror to themselves, when the cup of trembling is put into their hands, and they are made to drink the dregs of it, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

II. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even defies himself, and then what can be expected, but that he should go all to naught? These two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves; and then,

1. They make no conscience of what they say, true or false, right or wrong; (v. 3.) *The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit*; contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences. It is no marvel, if those that deceive themselves contrive how to deceive all mankind; for whom will they be true to that are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them is gone; the sparks of virtue extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing; they have left off to be wise, and to do good. They seemed to have been under the direc-

tion of wisdom, and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds in sunder; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, They that leave off to do good, leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, and to be vexatious to those about them that are good, and do good; (v. 4.) *He devises mischief upon his bed*. Note, (1.) Omissions make way for commissions; when men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the Devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn, into sin, and with respect to those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good, begin to do evil; the Devil, being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve, and a persecutor of righteous Abel. (2.) It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits a-work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management; with the subtlety, as well as the malice, of the old serpent; to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, Mic. ii. 1. This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having entered into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that has good neither in it, nor at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere, in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him, which he has purposed to do, though it be ever so contrary both to his duty and to his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts, and brazen their faces, with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others. *He abhors not evil*, but, on the contrary, takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or, this may bespeak his impenitency in sin. They that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission; but these hardened sinners have such seared stupified consciences, that they never reflect upon their sins afterward with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think that David, in all this, particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God, and left off all goodness; who pretended kindness to him, when he gave him his daughter to wife, but, at the same time, was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

5. Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. 6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. 7. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light

10. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee: and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 11. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. 12. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David, having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God; a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

I. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured, by the transgressions of the wicked; but, of a sudden, he turns his eye, and heart, and speech to God; *However it be, yet thou art good.* He here acknowledges,

1. The transcendent perfections of the Divine Nature. Among men, we have often reason to complain, *There is no truth or mercy*, (Hos. iv. 1.) *no judgment nor justice*, Isa. v. 7. But all these may be found in God, without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it.

(1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness; *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.* If men shut up the bowels of their compassions, yet, with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us, God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth, we meet with little content, but a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection, and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there, therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God, or of his government; but, from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him; nay, and causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens, infinitely above the mercies of any creature, he would, long ere this, have drowned the world again. See Isa. lv. 8, 9. Hos. xi. 9.

(2.) He is a God of inviolable truth; *Thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds.* Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is, and will be, faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, not one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that, though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity, but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reaches so high, that it does not change with the weather, as men's does, for it reaches to the *skies*, so it should be read, (as some think,) above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region.

(3.) He is a God of incontestable justice and equity; *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains*, so immovable and inflexible itself, and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain or more plain than this, That the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures. Even *when clouds and darkness are*

round about him, yet judgment and justice are the inhabitants of his throne, xcvi. 2.

(4.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design; *"Thy judgments are a great deep"*, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding." As his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us; *His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters.* We know that he does all wisely and well, but what he does we know not now, it is time enough to know hereafter.

2. The extensive care and beneficence of the Divine Providence; *"Thou preservest man and beast"*, not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life." The beasts, though not capable of knowing and praising God, are yet graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he gives them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute-creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

3. The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe, (1.) Their character; (v. 7.) they are such as are allured, by the *excellency of God's loving-kindness*, to put their trust under the shadow of his wings. [1.] God's loving-kindness is precious to them; they relish it, they taste a transcendent sweetness in it, they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God, that do not admire his loving-kindness; and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it. [2.] They therefore repose an entire confidence in him; they have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe, and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, Matth. xxiii. 37. It was the character of proselytes, that they came to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*; (Ruth ii. 12.) and what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his loving-kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love, will cleave to him. (2.) Their privilege; happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness.

[1.] Their desires shall be answered; (v. 8.) *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house*; their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled; in God all-sufficient they shall have enough, all that which an enlightened, enlarged, soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world and the delights of sense will surfeit, but never satisfy, Isa. lv. 2. But the communications of divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of Providence so far satisfy them that are content with such things as they have; *I have all, and abound*, Phil. iv. 18. The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life, with this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more, in this world, than to live a life of communion with God, and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant, satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

[2.] Their joys shall be constant; *Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* There are pleasures that are truly divine; "They are thy pleasures; not only which come from thee

as the Giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the Matter and Centre of them." Being purely spiritual, they are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy even to the delights of the Eternal Mind. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each; see xlv. 4. The pleasures of sense are putrid puddle-water; those of faith are pure and pleasant, *clear as crystal*, Rev. xxii. 1. God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it; works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven, they shall be for ever drinking of those *pleasures that are at God's right hand*, satiated with a *fulness of joy*, xvi. 11.

[3.] Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, v. 9. Having God himself for their felicity, *First*, In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, v. 8. The God of nature is the Fountain of natural life; in him we live, and move, and have our being; the God of grace is the Fountain of spiritual life. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God; he is the Spring and Author of all its sensations of divine things, and all its motions toward them: he quickens whom he will; and whosoever will, may come, and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the Fountain of eternal life; the happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love, without interruption or fear of cessation. *Secondly*, In him they have light in perfection, wisdom, knowledge, and joy; all included in this light; *In thy light we shall see light*, that is, 1. "In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory, we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings." That divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the Light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 John iii. 2. 2. "In communion with thee now; by the communications of thy grace to us, and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire." This is a dark world, we see little comfort in it; but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light, light that is lasting, and never wastes. In this world, we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means; but in heaven, *God himself shall be with us*, (Rev. xxi. 3.) and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

II. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, v. 10. (1.) The persons he prays for are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs: the upright in heart, that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man: those that are not upright with God, do not know him as they should. (2.) The blessing he begs for them, is, God's loving-kindness, that is, the tokens of his favour toward them; and his righteousness, that is, the workings of his grace in them; or his loving-kindness and righteousness are his goodness, according to promise; they are mercy and truth. (3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed; *Oh continue it, draw it*

out, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself; the happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression, as some think; for the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. *In these is continuance*, Isa. lxiv. 5.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort; (v. 11.) "*Let not the foot of pride come against me*, to trip up my heels, or trample upon me; and let not the hand of the wicked, which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble." Let not those who fight against God, triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God, cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoices in hope of the downfall of his enemies, in due time; (v. 12.) "There where they thought to have gained the point against me, they are themselves fallen; taken in that snare which they laid for me." There, in the other world, (so some,) there where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which they shall, assuredly, never be able to rise, from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true, we are not to rejoice, when any particular enemy of ours falls; but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity, will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is; calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversion; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is *Maschil—a teaching psalm*; it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to conduct ourselves as becomes us, under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets, (and David was one,) was to explain the law. Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the obedient, and denounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation; for, when they came to be applied to particular persons, many instances occurred of sinners in prosperity, and saints in adversity; to reconcile those instances with the word that God had spoken, is the scope of the prophet in this psalm. In which, 1. He forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked, in their wicked ways, v. 1, 7, 8. II. He gives very good reasons why we should not fret at it. 1. Because of the scandalous character of the wicked, (v. 12, 13, 21, 32.) notwithstanding their prosperity; and the honourable character of the righteous, v. 21, 26, 30, 31. 2. Because of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to, (v. 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38.) and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of, from all the malicious designs of the wicked, v. 13, 15, 17, 28, 33, 39, 40. 3. Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people, and the favour he shows them, v. 11, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 28, 29, 37. III. He prescribes very good remedies against this sin of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies, v. 3, 6, 27, 34. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish one another rightly to understand the providence of God, and to accommodate ourselves to it; at all times carefully to do our duty, and then patiently to leave the event with God, and to believe that, how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him.

A psalm of David.

1. **F**RET not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity: 2. For they shall

soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3. Trust in the LORD, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. 4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart. 5. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: 6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.

The instructions here given are very plain; much need not be said for the exposition of them, but there is a deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

I. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil-doers; (*v. 1, 2.*) *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* We may suppose, that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart, (in his communing with that upon his bed,) for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing, for instruction to others that might be in the like temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success, to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now, 1. When we look abroad, we see the world full of evil-doers, and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will, and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves, and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time; and therefore, if it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing. 2. When we look within, we find ourselves tempted to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burthens, these blemishes and common nuisances of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world, and unkind to his church, in permitting such men to live, and prosper, and prevail, as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects; we are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience, and do so too. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that we may share in their gains, and eat of their dainties: and this is that which we are warned against; *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments, they are the uneasiness of the spirit, and the rottenness of the bones; it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against them. Yet that is not all, for, 3. When we look forward with an eye of faith, we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door, and they are ripening apace for it, *v. 2.* They flourish, but as the grass, and as the green herb, which nobody envies or frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is like that of a fruitful tree, (*i. 3.*) but that of the wicked man, like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived. (1.) They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself, to which it is confined. (2.) They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

II. We are here counselled to live a life of confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil-doers; if

we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do so ill for theirs.

Here are three excellent precepts, which we are to be ruled by, and, to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our Hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, *v. 3.* (1.) It is required that we trust in the Lord, and do good, that we confide in God, and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God, and then live as we list; no, it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then, (2.) It is promised that we shall be provided for in this world; *So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* He does not say, "So shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted." This is not necessary; a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things; but, "Thou shalt have a place to live in, and that in the land, in Canaan, the valley of vision, and thou shalt have food convenient for thee." This is more than we deserve, it is as much as a good man will indent for, (*Gen. xxviii. 20.*) and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance; *Verily thou shalt be fed.* (so some read it,) thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding, upon the promises. "*Verily thou shalt be fed*, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee." God himself is a Shepherd, a Feeder, to all those that trust in him, *xxiii. 1.*

2. We must make God our heart's delight, and then we shall have our heart's desire; (*v. 4.*) we must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; our souls must return to him, and repose in him, as their Rest, and their Portion, for ever. Being satisfied of his loving-kindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, *xliii. 4.* We were commanded (*v. 3.*) to do good, and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him. And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God, has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services; *He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.* He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to, God, to please him, and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our Guide, and submit in every thing to his guidance and disposal; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, and to our satisfaction, *v. 5, 6.*

(1.) The duty is very easy; and if we do it aright, it will make us easy; *Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord*, so the margin reads it, *Prov. xvi. 3. Ps. lv. 22. Cast thy burthen upon the Lord*, the burthen of thy care, *1 Pet. v. 7.* We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and

perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, (Matth. vi. 25.) not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with the contrivance of the means, or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him, by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns, as he pleases; *Reveal thy way unto the Lord*; (so the LXX) that is, "By prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares about it, before the Lord," (as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judg. xi. 11.) "and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God does." We must do our duty, (that must be our care,) and then leave the event with God; *Sit still, and see how the matter will fall*, Ruth iii. 18. We must follow Providence, and not force it; *subscribe to Infinite Wisdom, and not prescribe*.

(2.) The promise is very sweet; [1.] In general, "He shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes, to thy satisfaction." [2.] In particular, "He will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day*;" (v. 6.) that is, "He shall make it to appear, that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough." First, It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people, may, for a time, be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of Providence, (Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness,) or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who give them bad names, which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. Secondly, It is promised that God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocence, and bring forth their righteousness, to their honour; perhaps in this world, at furthest, in the great day, Matth. xiii. 43. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

7. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9. For evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 12. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13. The LORD shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming. 14. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but

the LORD upholdeth the righteous. 18. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume, into smoke shall they consume away.

In these verses, we have,

I. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless, fruitless, discontents and distrusts, that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them, and arm us against them.

1. Let us compose ourselves by believing in God; "*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him*;" (v. 7.) be well reconciled to all he does, and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way. Be silent to the Lord," so the word is; not with a sullen, but a submissive, silence. A patient bearing of what is laid upon us, and a patient expectation of what is further appointed for us, are as much our interest as they are our duty; for it will make us always easy, and there is a great deal of reason for it, for it is making a virtue of necessity.

2. Let us not dispose ourselves at what we see in this world; "*Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his wicked way*;" who, though he is a bad man, yet thrives and grows rich and great in the world; no nor because of him who does mischief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked devices to pass against those that are virtuous and good, who seems to have gained his point, and to have run them down; if thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and *cease from anger*, (v. 8.) check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account; be not angry at any thing that God does, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil*, do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them, and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves, or some desperate course to avoid them and their power." Note, A fretful, discontented, spirit lies open to many temptations; and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

II. The foregoing reasons, taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous, notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon, and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression.

We are cautioned (v. 7.) not to envy the wicked, either worldly prosperity, or the success of their plots against the righteous. The reasons here given respect these two temptations severally.

I. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it.

(1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end; (v. 9.) *Evil-doers shall be cut off* by some sudden stroke of divine justice, in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin, will not only flow away from them, (Job xx. 28.) but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men, (lxxxiii. 17.) how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them, or from being willing to espouse their lot, for

better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near; (v. 10.) *Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be what they now are; they are brought into desolation in a moment, lxxiii. 19.* Have a little patience, for the *Judge stands before the door*, Jam. v. 8, 9. Moderate your passion, for the *Lord is at hand*; (Phil. iv. 5.) and when it comes, it will be an utter ruin, he and his shall be extirpated, the day that comes shall leave him neither root nor branch; (Mal. iv. 1.) *thou shalt diligently consider his place*, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but it shall not be, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind him. To the same purport, (v. 20.) *The wicked shall perish*; their death is their perdition, because it is the period of all their joy, and a passage to endless misery; *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*, but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; such they make themselves, who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them; *They shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke*. Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs, not solid or substantial, but loose and washy; and when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke. The day of God's vengeance on the wicked, is represented as a *sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams*; (Isa. xxxiv. 6.) for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices; damned sinners are sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity; while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, *like a lamb in a large place*; (Hos. iv. 16.) and the more they prosper, the more will God be glorified in their ruin.

(2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better, and more desirable, than that of the wicked, v. 16. In general, *a little that a righteous man has of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, is better than the riches of many wicked*. Observe, [1.] The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the Divine Providence, that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would show us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were, those would have most, that are best and dearest to God. [2.] That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's much; see Prov. xv. 16, 17.—xvi. 8.—xxviii. 6. A godly man's estate, though ever so little, is better than a wicked man's estate, though ever so much, for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title, God gives it to them by promise, (Gal. iii. 18.) it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the Heir of all things; and it is put to a better use, it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God; *unto the pure all things are pure*, Tit. i. 15. A little wherewith God is served and honoured, is better than a great deal prepared for Babel, or for a base lust.

The promises here made to the righteous, secure them such a happiness that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their comfort,

First, That they shall inherit the earth, as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the *life that now is*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as *things to come*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. They have it by inheritance, a

safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance. When evil-doers are cut off, the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered; *the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, Job xxvii. 17. Prov. xiii. 22. This promise is here made, 1. To those that live a life of faith; (v. 9.) *those that wait upon the Lord*, as dependants on him, expectants from him, and supplicants to him, *shall inherit the earth*, as a token of his present favour to them, and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good Master that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. 2. To those that live a quiet and peaceable life; (v. 11.) *The meek shall inherit the earth*. They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have; and they have most satisfaction in themselves, and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel promise, and a confirmation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, Matth. v. 5.

Secondly, That they shall *delight themselves in the abundance of peace*, v. 11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which they have that love God's law, whom *nothing shall offend*; (cxix. 165.) that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ; (lxxii. 7.) that peace which the world cannot give, (John xiv. 27.) and which the wicked cannot have, Isa. lvii. 21. This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast; while they that have abundance of wealth do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it.

Thirdly, That God knows their days, v. 18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded; and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompense. He knows their fair days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and, as the day is, so shall the strength be.

Fourthly, That *their inheritance shall be for ever*. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbered; God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day; but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days; no, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must last as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself; *Their inheritance shall be for ever*; not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible, indefeasible, one, which is laid up for them in heaven. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world.

Fifthly, That, in the worst of times, it shall go well with them; (v. 19.) *They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God*, nor of the profession they have made of religion; for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them, in evil times. When others droop, they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence; even in the days of famine, when others are dying for hunger round about them, they shall be satisfied, as Elijah was; some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it; so that, if they should be hardly bestead and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) *fret themselves*, and

curse their king and their God, (Isa. viii. 21.) but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation, even when *the fig-tree does not blossom*, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the occasional success of the designs of the wicked against the just; though they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point, and bring them all to pass, yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

(1.) Their plots will be their shame, *v. 12, 13*. It is true, *the wicked plotteth against the just*, there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed; their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness; if that fail, then to destroy them. With this end in view, they have acted with a great deal both of cursed policy and contrivance, (they plot, they practise against the just,) and of cursed zeal and fury, *they gnash upon them with their teeth*; so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up, and so full of rage and indignation are they, because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous; *the Lord shall laugh at them*, ii. 4, 5. They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them; he is not only displeased with them, but he despises them and all their attempts as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain; for *he sees that his day is coming*, that is, [1.] The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now; *this is your hour*, Luke xxii. 53. But God will have his day shortly, a day of recompenses, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passes for glorious. *It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment*; (1 Cor. iv. 3.) God's day will give a decisive judgment. [2.] The day of their ruin, the wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day is coming; which denotes delay, it is not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to despise the rage of her enemies, and *laugh them to scorn*, Isa. xxxvii. 22.

(2.) Their attempts will be their destruction, *v. 14, 15*. See here, [1.] How barbarous they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow, no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life; that which they design, is, to cast down and slay; it is the blood of the saints they thirst after. They carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution; they have drawn the sword, and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor, and needy; this shows them to be very cowardly; and against the guiltless, *such as be of upright conversation*, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them, or any other person; this shows them to be very wicked. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But, [2.] How justly their malice recoils upon themselves; *their sword shall turn into their own heart*; which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice, and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction, which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against themselves, will give them their death's wound.

(3.) Those that are not suddenly cut off, shall yet be so disabled to do any further mischief, that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured; *Their bones shall be broken*; (*v. 15*.) the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them, and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of, to

serve their bloody purposes with; nay, their arms shall be broken, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises. *But the Lord upholds the righteous*, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions, nor are crushed by the violence of their enemies. He upholds them both in their integrity, and in their prosperity; and they that are so upheld by the Rock of ages, have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. 22. For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off. 23. The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with his* hand. 25. I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26. *He* is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. 27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. 32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purport with the foregoing verses of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

I. What is required of us, as the way to our happiness; which we may learn both from the characters here laid down, and from the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

1. We must make conscience of giving every body their own; for *the wicked borrows, and pays not again*, *v. 21*. It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked, as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply, and then be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. Whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

2. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence; for as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous, that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind, and to do good, (and so some understand it, God's blessing increases his little, to that degree, that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others,) so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man, that he has a heart propor-

tionable to his estate; *he shows mercy, and gives, v. 21. He is ever merciful*, or every day, or all the day, merciful, and lends, and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; giving and lending are then acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which, if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing. He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

3. We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness; (*v. 27. Depart from evil, and do good*; cease to do evil, and abhor it; learn to do well, and cleave to it. This is true religion.

4. We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God, and edify others. It is part of the character of a righteous man, (*v. 30. That his mouth speaketh wisdom*; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him; his tongue talks not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment, that is, of the word and providence of God, and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good, and to the use of edifying.

5. We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God; (*v. 31. The law of God, of his God, is in his heart*; and in vain do we pretend that God is our God, if we do not receive his law into our hearts, and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment, (*v. 30.*) unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling, principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform, *none of his steps will slide*; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

II. What is assured to us, as instances of our happiness and comfort, upon these conditions.

1. That we should have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security, of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments; (*v. 22. Such as be blessed of God*, as all the righteous are, with a Father's blessing, by virtue of that *shall inherit the earth, or the land*, for so the same word is translated, *v. 29. the land of Canaan*, that glory of all lands. Our creature-comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. *The earth shall yield us her increase*, if God, as our own God, gives us his blessing, *lxvii. 6. And as those whom God blesses are thus blessed indeed, for they shall inherit the land; so those whom he curses are cursed indeed, and they shall be cut off*, and rooted out; and their extirpation by the divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous, by the divine blessing, and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs, so as may be most for his glory; (*v. 23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*; by his grace and holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs, of good men; he has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent; by his providence he overrules the events that concern them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do, and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps, by the whispers of conscience, saying, *This is the way*,

walk in it. He does not always show him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his guidance; and this, (1.) Because he delights in his way, and is well-pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. *The Lord knows the way of the righteous*, (*i. 6.*) knows it with favour, and therefore directs it. (2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it: for as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well-pleased with what we do under his guidance.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls either into sin or into trouble; (*v. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down*. (1.) A good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Though he may, for a time, lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither; and there will come a spring after the winter. (2.) A good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down; God will be the Strength of his heart, when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That he shall not want the necessary supports of this life, (*v. 25.*) "*I have been young, and now am old*; and, among all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition, and the observations I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to that extremity as to beg their bread." David had himself begged his bread of Ahimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness-sake out of all the temporal promises, (*Mark x. 30.*) because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it, as make it rather a gift (as the apostle reckons it, *Phil. i. 29.*) than a loss or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread; *forsaken*, so some expound it. If they do want, God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man that wanders abroad for bread, saying, *Where is it?* *Job xv. 23.* Nor shall he be denied, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him, *Luke xv. 16.* Nor shall he grudge, if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies, when they wandered up and down for meat, *lx. 15.* Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity; it is *withholding more than is meet that tends to poverty*, *Prov. xi. 24.*

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits; (*v. 28. The Lord loves judgment*; he delights in doing justice himself, and he delights in those that do justice; and therefore he forsakes not his saints in affliction, when others make themselves strange to them, and become shy of them; but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, that the saints in every age be taken under his protection, that the

succession be preserved to the end of time, and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations, and through all the trials, of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*, that is, a preservation for ever, 2 Tim. iv. 18. Ps. xii. 7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall dwell for evermore, (v. 27.) and not be cut off, as the *seed of the wicked*, v. 28. That we shall inherit the land which the Lord our God gives us, and *dwell therein for ever*, v. 29. They shall not be tossed that make God their Rest, and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; it is in heaven only, that city which has foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, that seek our ruin, v. 32, 33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watches the righteous, (as a roaring lion watches his prey,) and seeks to slay him; there are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle; they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually, and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it; and they are very spiteful, for they seek to slay him: but it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the Devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of; that great red dragon, who seeks to slay them; that roaring lion, who goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments. (1.) He shall not prevail as a field-adversary; *The Lord will not leave him in his hand*; he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and *their faith shall not fail*, Luke xxii. 31, 32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 Cor. x. 13. (2.) He shall not prevail as a law-adversary; *God will not condemn him when he is judged*, though urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, that *accuses them before our God day and night*. His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua, (*Zech. iii. 1, 2.*) *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. It is God that justifies*, and then *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*

34. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. 35. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; 36. Yet he passed away, and lo, he *was not*: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of *that man is peace*. 38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39. But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the Lord; *he is* their strength in the time of trouble. 40. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver

them from the wicked, and save them. because they trust in him.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon, (for that is the nature of this poem,) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

I. The duty here pressed upon us is still the same, (v. 34.) *Wait on the Lord, and keep his way*; duty is ours, and we must mind it, and make conscience of it, keep God's way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going; but events are God's, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of *keeping God's way*, we may with cheerfulness wait on him, and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good Master both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

II. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked, and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man, being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, *goes into the sanctuary of God*, and leads us thither; (lxxiii. 17.) there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation, and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked, at last, however they may prosper a while. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off*; (v. 38.) and that cannot be well, that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked, in their end, will be cut off from all good, and all hopes of it; a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be for ever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. (1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world; that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God, when their day was come to fall; (v. 35, 36.) *I have seen a wicked man*, (the word is singular,) suppose Saul, or Ahithophel, (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm,) *in great power, formidable*, (so some render it,) *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed, and finely flourishing, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, which produces all leaves and no fruit; like a native home-born Israelite, (so Dr. Hammond,) likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz, long before, had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job v. 3. And David saw cause for it; for this bay-tree is withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed; *he passed away as a dream*, as a shadow, such was he, and all the pomp and power he was so proud of; he was gone in an instant, *he was not*, *I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found*. He had acted his part, and then quitted the stage, and there was no miss of him. (2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints, as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world; (v. 34.) *When the wicked are cut off*, (and cut off they certainly will be,) *thou shalt see it*, with awful adorations of the divine justice. *The transgressors shall be destroyed together*, v. 38. In this world, God singles out here one sinner, and there another, out of many, to be made an example in *terrorem*—as a warning; but in the day of judgment there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. They that have sinned together shall be

damned together; *Bind them in bundles, to burn them.*

2. The blessedness of the righteous, at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people.

(1.) Preferment. There have been times, the iniquity of which has been such, that men's piety has hindered their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates; but those that keep God's way may be assured that, in due time, he will *exalt them to inherit the land*, (v. 34.) he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity and honour, and true wealth, in the New Jerusalem; to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type; he will exalt them above all contempt and danger.

(2.) Peace, v. 37. Let all people *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright*, take notice of him to admire him and imitate him, keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that *the end of that man is peace*. Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again, after the time that he was afflicted; however, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him, and his sun may set bright; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace. They that walk in their uprightness, while they live, shall enter into peace when they die, Isa. lvii. 2. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous, Numb. xxiii. 10.

(3.) Salvation, v. 39, 40. *The salvation of the righteous*, (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10.) that is, of the Lord; it will be the Lord's doing; the eternal salvation, that salvation of God, which those shall see that *order their conversation aright*, (l. 23.) that is, of the Lord too. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them, will be a God all-sufficient to them. *He is their Strength in time of trouble*, to support them under it, and carry them through it; *He shall help them and deliver them*, help them to do their duties, to bear their burthens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts; help them to bear their troubles well, and get good by them, and, in due time, shall deliver them out of their troubles. He shall deliver them from the wicked that would overwhelm them and swallow them up; shall secure them there, where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall save them; not only keep them safe, but make them happy, because they trust in him; not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him, and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

PSALM XXXVIII.

This is one of the penitential psalms; it is full of grief and complaint, from the beginning to the end. David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief and the matter of his complaints. It should seem, he was now sick and in pain, which reminded him of his sins, and helped to humble him for them; he was, at the same time, deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies, so that the psalm is calculated for the depth of distress and a complication of calamities. He complains, I. Of God's displeasure and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, v. 1..5. II. Of his bodily sickness, v. 6..10. III. Of the unkindness of his friends, v. 11. IV. Of injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good conduct toward them, yet confessing his sins against God, v. 12..20. *Lastly*, He concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God, for his gracious presence and

help, v. 21, 22. In singing this psalm, we out to be much affected with the malignity of sin; and if we have not such troubles as are here described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore must sing of them by way of preparation, and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1. **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. 3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* 4. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5. My wounds stink, *and* are corrupt, because of my foolishness. 6. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. 7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease*; and *there is no soundness in my flesh.* 8. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. 9. LORD, all my desire *is* before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. 10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. 11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a psalm *to bring to remembrance*; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed, 1. To bring to his own remembrance; we will suppose it penned when he was sick and in pain, and then it teaches us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance; to bring the sin to remembrance, for which God contended with us; to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us, for our humiliation. *In a day of adversity, consider.* Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under, and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that, upon every review of this psalm, he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him, and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purport was the writing of Hezekiah, when he had been sick. 2. To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think, and what to say, when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

I. He deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction; (v. 1.) *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.* With this same petition he began another prayer, *for the visitation of the sick*, vi. 1. This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours, when we are in affliction, that, however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God, must pray against that, more than any outward affliction, and be content to bear any outward affliction, while it comes from, and consists with, the love of God.

II. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's

displeasure upon his soul; (v. 2.) *Thine arrows stick fast in me.* Let Job's complaint (*ch. vi. 4.*) expound David's here; by the arrows of the Almighty, he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy, frightful, apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out, and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned—the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them, and the wound will be incurable. "Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presses me sore, and I am ready to sink under it; it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long; and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand!" Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand, *for David*, (xviii. 14.) but now *against* him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath, as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under; (v. 3.) *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger.* The bitterness of it, infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst, it caused the disquietude of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and roared terribly, v. 8. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger; which shows what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet, is, to keep ourselves in the love of God, and to do nothing to offend him.

III. He acknowledges his sin to be the procuring, provoking, cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, v. 3. He complains that his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great an agitation he was in. "It is because of thine anger; that kindles the fire which burns so fiercely;" but, in the next words, he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself. "It is because of my sin. I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon myself; my own iniquities do correct me." If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? it is sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies.

It is sin, therefore, that this good man complains most of, 1. As a burthen, a heavy burthen; (v. 4.) *"Mine iniquities are gone over my head,"* as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burthen upon my head, pressing me down, more than I am able to bear, or to bear up under." Note, Sin is a burthen. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight; (Heb. xii. 1.) all are clogged with it, it keeps men from soaring upward and pressing forward; all the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, Rom. vii. 24. The guilt of sin committed by us is a burthen, a heavy burthen; it is a burthen to God, he is pressed under it, (Amos ii. 13.) a burthen to the whole creation, which groans under it, Rom. viii. 21, 22. It will, first or last, be a burthen to the sinner himself, either a burthen of repentance, when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours, and is heavy laden, under it; or a burthen of ruin, when it sinks him to the lowest hell, and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, Zech. v. 8. Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burthens. 2. As wounds, danger-

ous wounds; (v. 5.) *"My wounds stink and are corrupt;"* (as wounds in the body rankle and fester, and grow foul, for want of being dressed and looked after;) and it is through my own foolishness." Sins are wounds, (Gen. iv. 23.) painful, mortal, wounds. Our wounds by sin are often in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness, in not confessing sin, xxxii. 3, 4. A slight sore neglected may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of.

IV. He bemoans himself because of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief, by giving vent to it, and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled, or distorted, bowed down greatly, and *went mourning all the day long*, v. 6. He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burthen and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sore-broken, and his heart disquieted, v. 8. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful.* This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his joints filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, or ulcer, or inflammation; some think a plague-sore, such as Hezekiah's boil; and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over distempered. See, (1.) What vile bodies those are which we carry about with us; what grievous diseases they are liable to; and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog. (2.) That the bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, though so great a prince, and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases; there was no soundness even in his flesh; probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When, at any time, we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and by our bodies. He was *feeble and sore-broken*, v. 8. His heart panted, and was in a continual palpitation, v. 10. His strength and limbs failed him; as for the light of his eyes, that was gone from him, either with much weeping, or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or through the lowness of his spirits, and the frequent returns of fainting.

Note, Sickness will tame the strongest body, and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet, when God contended with him by bodily sickness, and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he is become weak as water. Therefore let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance, however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him; (v. 11.) *My lovers* (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now *stand aloof from my sore*: they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints, but, like the priest and Levite, (Luke x. 31.) *passed by on the other side.* Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off. See what little reason we have to trust in man, or to wonder if we be disappointed in

our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a Friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore, and from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sore-broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

Lastly, In the midst of his complaints he comforts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers; (v. 9.) "*Lord, all my desire is before thee; thou knowest what I want, and what I would have, my groaning is not hid from thee.*" Thou knowest the burthens I groan under, and the blessings I groan after." The *groanings which cannot be uttered* are not hid from him that *searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 26, 27. In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burthen lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. 15. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O LORD my God. 16. For I said, *Hear me*; lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. 17. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. 18. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. 19. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. 20. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is. 21. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. 22. Make haste to help me, O LORD my salvation.

In these verses,

I. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, it should seem, not only took occasion, from the weakness of his body, and the trouble of his mind, to insult over him, but took advantage thence to do him a mischief. He has a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as (xxv. 19.) *Consider mine enemies.*

1. "They are very spiteful and cruel; they seek my hurt; nay, they seek after my life," v. 12. That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord, and all good men, was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited, or a public nuisance; such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, though it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that is thirsted after.

2. "They are very subtle and politic; they lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearied, they do it all the day long; they speak mischievous things one to another; every

one has something or other to propose, that may be a mischief to me." Mischief, covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a *snares*.

3. "They are very insolent and abusive; when my foot slips, when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me, they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that, if I slip, I shall certainly fall and be undone."

4. "They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful; they hate me wrongfully; (v. 19.) I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, they render evil for good, v. 20. Many a kindness I have done them; for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but for my love they are my adversaries," cix. 4. Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even then when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer, even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them; but very ill-natured those are whom no courtesy will oblige, who are rather exasperated by it.

5. "They are very impious and devilish; they are my adversaries merely because I follow the thing that good is;" they hated him, not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God, and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so; Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous; nor must we think it hard, because it will not always be so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

6. They are many and mighty; they are lively, they are strong, they are multiplied; (v. 19.) *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me?* iii. 1. Holy David was weak and faint, his heart panted, and his strength failed, he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends; but, at the same time, his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased; let us not therefore pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before them. It should seem that David, in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity, but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity, and broken through its most sacred bonds.

II. He reflects, with comfort, upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour, under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief, when they provoke us to sin; (Neh. vi. 13.) when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty; if by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and are saved from harm; if still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here.

1. He kept his temper, and was not ruffled or discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him, or the mischievous things that were said or done against him; (v. 13, 14.) "*I, as a deaf man, heard not*; I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disorder by them, much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury." Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf, he was dumb, as a man in

whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat, and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they sought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous, it is, generally, our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make bad worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, or by his soft answers to turn away their wrath, for they were men of such base spirits, that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he carried it thus meekly toward them, that he might prevent his own sin, and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearer, and, when he was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us, not to render railing for railing.

2. He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries, and silenced his own resentments of them. (1.) He trusted in God; (v. 15.) "*I was as a man that opens not his mouth, for in thee, O Lord, do I hope. I depend upon thee to plead my cause, and clear my innocence, and, some way or other, to put them to silence and shame.*" His lovers and friends, that should have owned him and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, v. 10. But God is a friend that will never fail us, if we hope in him. *I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear.* Why need I hear, and God hear too? *He careth for you;* (1 Pet. v. 7.) and why need you care, and God care too? "*Thou wilt answer,*" (so some,) "and therefore I will say nothing." Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a Witness to all the wrong that is done us, and, in due time, will be a Witness for us, and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because if we be, then we may expect that God will appear for us, for this is an evidence that we trust in him; but if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands, and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus, when he suffered, therefore threatened not, because he committed himself to him that judges righteously; (1 Pet. ii. 23.) and we shall lose nothing, at last, by doing so; *Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.* (2.) He called upon God; (v. 16.) *For I said, Hear me, that is supplied; "I said so,"* (as v. 15.) "in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they should rejoice over me. I comforted myself with that, when I was apprehensive that they would overwhelm me." It is a great support to us, when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to, whom we may be free with, and who will be faithful to us.

III. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities. 1. He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God, and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him; *I am ready to halt,* v. 17. This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the psalmist made upon himself in a like case, (lxxiii. 2.) *My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked;* so here, *I was ready to halt, ready to say, I have cleansed my hands in vain.* His sorrow was continual; *All the day long have I been plagued;* (lxxiii. 13, 14.) and it was continually before him, he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irre-

ligion. The fear of this drove him to his God; "In thee do I hope, not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin." Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who, by setting God always before them, have kept their standing. 2. He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself, and forfeited the divine protection, though he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself; (v. 18.) "*I will declare mine iniquity, and not cover it, I will be sorry for my sin, and not make a light matter of it;*" and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance, (1.) Confession of sin; "*I will declare mine iniquity;* I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss." We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves. (2.) Contrition for sin; *I will be sorry for it;* sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God, and the wrong he has done to himself; "I will be in care or fear about my sin," (so some,) "in fear lest it ruin me, and in care to get pardoned."

IV. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him, and seasonable powerful succour in his distress; (v. 21, 22.) "*Forsake me not, O Lord,* though my friends forsake me, and though I deserve to be forsaken by thee. Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art." Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction, than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor does any thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer, "*Lord, be not thou far from me; make haste for my help;* for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost, if relief do not come quickly." God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, "Thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my Salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation." Is any afflicted, let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope, in singing this psalm.

PSALM XXXIX.

David seems to have been in a great strait, when he penned this psalm, and, upon some account or other, very uneasy; for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composes his spirit, himself to take that good counsel which he had given to others, (37.) *to rest in the Lord,* and wait patiently for him, without fretting; for it is easier to give the good advice, than to give the good example, of quietness under affliction. What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for the conflict David was now in, does not appear. Perhaps it was the death of some dear friend or relation that was the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and, at the same time, it should seem too, himself was weak and ill, and under some prevailing distemper. His enemies likewise were seeking advantages against him, and watched for his halting, that they might have something to reproach him for. Thus aggravated, I. He relates the struggle that was in his breast, between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, v. 1.-3. II. He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, v. 4.-6. III. He applies himself to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening out of his life till he was ready for death, v. 7.-13. This is a funeral psalm, and very

proper for the occasion; in singing it, we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state, of human life; and those on whose comforts God has, by death, made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them, in order to their obtaining of what we ought much to aim at under such an affliction, which is, to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit, and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

To the chief musician, even to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

1. **I SAID**, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. 2. I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, *even from good*; and my sorrow was stirred. 3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: *then spake I with my tongue*. 4. **LORD**, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; *that I may know how frail I am*. 5. Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions; and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss, may be amended, and what was well thought of, may be improved the next time.

I. He remembered the covenants he had made with God, to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did, and what he said. When, at any time, we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against the particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can, and will, remind us of them; (Jer. ii. 20.) *Thou saidst, I will not transgress*; and therefore we ought to remind ourselves of them. So David did here.

1. He remembers that he had resolved, in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking; (v. 1.) *I said, I will take heed to my ways*; and it was well said, and what he would never unsay, and therefore must never gainsay. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us, to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. (2.) We ought steadfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution; fast bind, fast find. (3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must, upon all occasions, remind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

2. He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue sins—That he would not sin with his tongue, That he would not speak amiss, either to offend God, or *offend the generation of the righteous*, lxxiii. 15. It is not so easy as we could wish, not to sin in thought; but if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further: and this is so great an attainment, that *if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*; and so needful a one, that he who *seems to be reli-*

gious, but bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. David had resolved, (1.) That he would, at all times, watch against tongue sins. “I will keep a bridle, or muzzle, upon my mouth;” a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way, and on a good pace; see Jam. iii. 3. Watchfulness in the habit, is the bridle upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise, is the hand upon the bridle, a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce, and does mischief; by particular steadfast resolution, corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled. (2.) That he would double his guard against them, when there was most danger of scandal; *when the wicked is before me*. When he was in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them, or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men fall into bad company, they must take heed what they say. Or, *when the wicked is before me*, in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate, of evil-doers, he was tempted to speak amiss; and therefore *then* he would take special care what he said. Note, the stronger the temptation to a sin is, the stronger the resolution must be against it.

II. Pursuant to these covenants, he made a shift, with much ado, to bridle his tongue; (v. 2.) *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good*. His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was, the more praise-worthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution, in the strength of God’s grace, will do more toward the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good? Was it his wisdom, that he refrained good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication, requires that which is good, and *to the use of edifying*, Eph. iv. 29.

III. The less he spake, the more he thought, and the more warmly. Binding the distempered part, did but draw the humour to it; *My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me*, v. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under; though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and while he was musing upon his afflictions, and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit, ought not to pore much, for, while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel, and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

IV. When he did speak, at last, it was to the purpose; *At the last, I spake with my tongue*; some make what he said, to be the breach of his good purpose, and that, in what he said, he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows, to be a passionate wish, *that he might die like Elijah*, (1 Kings xix. 4.) and Job, ch. vi. 8, 9. But I rather take it to be, not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him,

for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said, was, a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject, which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death; (v. 4.) *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.* He does not mean, "Lord, let me know how long I shall live, and when I shall die;" we could not, in faith, pray such a prayer, for God has no where promised to let us know, but has, in wisdom, locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it; but, *Lord, make me to know my end,* means, "Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it, (Deut. xxxii. 29.) and to improve what I know concerning it." *The living know that they shall die,* (Eccl. ix. 5.) but few care for thinking of it; we have therefore need to pray, that God by his grace would conquer that aversion which is in our corrupt hearts, to the thoughts of death. "Lord, make me to consider," (1.) "What death is; it is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life; it is the end of all men," Eccl. vii. 2. It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompense and retribution. To the wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. "Lord, give me to know my end, to be better acquainted with death, to make it more familiar to me, (Job xvii. 14.) and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die." (2.) "How near it is; Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God; the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies, *My days are determined;* (Job xiv. 5.) and that the measure is but short; "My days will soon be numbered and finished." When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. (3.) That it is continually working in us; "Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how faint the spirits, which are as the oil, to keep that lamp burning." We find, by daily experience, that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay; "Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands."

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading it with God for relief under the burthens of life, as Job often, and pleading it with himself, for his quickening to the business of life.

(1.) Man's life on earth is short, and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it, and prepare for the end of it; (v. 5.) *Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth;* the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes; we need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them; no, we have the standard of them at our fingers' end, and there is no multiplication of it, it is but one hand-breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for the number of our months is with him; it is short, and he knows it to be so; "It is as nothing before thee." He remembers *how short our time is,* lxxxix. 47. "It is nothing in comparison with thee;" so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

(2.) Man's life on earth is vain, and of no value,

and therefore it is folly to be fond of it, and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel, *man is vanity,* in his present state; he is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself; he and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity; he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. [1.] *Every man is vanity,* without exception; high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. [2.] He is so *at his best estate,* when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy, and merry, and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong. [3.] He is *altogether vanity,* as vain as you can imagine. *All man is all vanity,* so it may be read; every thing about him is uncertain, nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. [4.] *Verily* he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances. [5.] *Selah* is annexed, as a note commanding observation. "Stop here, and pause a while, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity." We ourselves are so.

Now, for the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here mentions three things, and shows the vanity of each of them, v. 6. *First,* The vanity of our joys and honours: *Surely every man walks* (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure,) in a shadow, in an image, *in a vain show.* When he makes a figure, his fashion passes away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, Acts xxv. 23. It is but a show, and therefore a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly, when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life, (Jam. iv. 14.) and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. *Secondly,* The vanity of our griefs and fears; *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* Our disquietudes are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are often the creatures of our own fancy and imagination: and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot, with all our disquietment, alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God; things will be as they are, when we have disquieted ourselves ever so much about them. *Thirdly,* The vanity of our cares and toils. He takes a great deal of pains to *heap up riches,* and they are but like heaps of manure in the furrows of the field, good for nothing, unless they be spread. But when he has filled his treasures with his trash, he *knows not who shall gather them,* nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone: for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, *For whom do I labour?* and that is his folly, Eccl. iv. 8. But if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe; (Eccl. ii. 19.) *This is vanity.*

7. And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish. 9. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. 10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. 11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. *Selah.* 12. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold

not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*. 13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist, having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all the comforts of life, here, in these verses, turns his eyes and heart heaven-ward. When there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature, it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here expresses,

I. His dependence on God, *v.* 7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, 1. He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectation from it; "*Now, Lord, what wait I for?*" Even nothing from the things of sense and time: I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for, from this earth." Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life, should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. "If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having or seeking my portion in it." We cannot count upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in any relation, for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. "Now, though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other, from the world, now I am of another mind." 2. He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God; *My hope is in thee*. Note, When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

II. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, *v.* 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world; "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, in a way of complaint and murmuring.*" He now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which were disturbed, *v.* 2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burdened with, he will be easy; "*because thou didst it; it did not come to pass by chance, but according to thine appointment.*" We may here see, 1. A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, "This is the finger of God, it is the Lord's doing;" whoever were the instruments. 2. A good man, for that reason, saying nothing against it. He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it. All that God does is well done.

III. His desire toward God, and the prayers he puts up to him; *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*, as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin, and the preventing of his shame, *v.* 8. Before he prays, (*v.* 10.) *Remove thy stroke from me*, he prays, (*v.* 8.) "*Deliver me from all mine offences*, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have been captivated by." When God forgives our sins, he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all. He pleads, *Make me not a reproach to the foolish*. Wicked people are foolish people; and then they show their folly most, when they think to show their wit, by scoffing at God's people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience; ("Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will

laugh at me for;") and as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burthens; (*v.* 10.) *Remove thy stroke away from me*. Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God, our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other, for relief. He only, that inflicts the stroke, can remove it; and we may then, in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned, (*Isa.* xxxviii. 17.) and when, as here, the affliction is sanctified, and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

(1.) He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion; *I am consumed by the blow of thy hand*. His sickness prevailed to that degree, that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. "The blow, or conflict, of thine hand has brought me even to the gates of death." Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best, of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, *v.* 11. When God, at any time, contends with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, [1.] We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for, whenever he corrects man, it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, though it be *bound with his hand*, *Lam.* i. 14. [2.] We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes make man's beauty to consume away like a moth; we often see, we sometimes feel, how much the body is weakened and decayed by sickness, in a little time; the countenance is changed; where are the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this that presents itself to view. What a poor thing is beauty; and what fools are they that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly, be consumed thus! Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, *Job* iv. 19. Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth does the garment. All which abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless; so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped that the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that therefore it would be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction has done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. [1.] It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that; when the Lord God called to mourning, he answered the call, and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could, in faith, pray, *Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears*, *v.* 12. He that does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them, (and if he speak, it is done,) or, in the mean time, speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness. [2.] It

had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and, when we are afflicted, we pray more, and pray better, than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer, and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which, by his providence, he gives occasion for, and which, by his Spirit of grace, he indites, shall not return void. [3.] It had helped to wean him from the world, and to take his affections off from it; now he began, more than ever, to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God; "Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wunts and burthens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger; and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?"

Lastly, He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer; (v. 13.) "*O spare me, ease me, raise me up from this illness, that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world.*" Some make this to be a passionate wish, that God would send him help quickly, or it would be too late, like that, Job x. 20, 21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer, that God would continue him here, till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life, before his life was finished; *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.*

PSALM XL.

It should seem, David penned this psalm, upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably, it was some trouble of mind, arising from a sense of sin, and of God's displeasure against him for it; whatever it was, the same Spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance, was in him, at the same time, a Spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; or, ere he was aware, he was led to speak of Christ's undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before that illustrious prophecy, and the prayers that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him, it will be worth while to consider. In this psalm, I. David records God's favour to him, in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, v. 1.-5. II. Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, v. 6.-10. III. That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, v. 11.-17. If, in singing this psalm, we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

I. **I** WAITED patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. 4. Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust; and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5. Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy won-

derful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.

In these verses, we have,

I. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist had been in. He had been plunged into a horrible pit, and into miry clay, (v. 2.) out of which he could not work himself, and in which he found himself sinking yet further. He says nothing, here, either of the sickness of his body, or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet, and perplexity of spirit, that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit, under the sense of God's withdrawals, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are indeed a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

II. His humble attendance upon God, and his believing expectations from him in those depths; *I waited patiently for the Lord*, v. 1. *Waiting, I waited.* He expected relief from no other than from God; the same hand that tears, must heal, that smites, must bind up, (Hos. vi. 1.) or it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and he was big with expectation, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest, of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently; which intimates that the relief did not come quickly; yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony, both in the garden, and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful; but then he prayed, *Father, glorify thy name; Father, save me*; then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, "My God, my God," and thus waited patiently for him.

III. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which he records for the honour of God, and his own and others' encouragement.

1. God answered his prayers; *He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* Those that wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was *heard*, *in that he feared*, Heb. v. 7. Nay, he was sure that the Father heard him always.

2. He silenced his fears, and stilled the tumult of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience; (v. 2.) "*He brought me out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone bright upon my soul, with the assurances of his favour; and not only so, but set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*" Those that have been under the prevalency of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves; they are brought up out of a horrible pit. (1.) The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven, as they were, before, cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the Rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone between us and God we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. (2.) It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a

steadfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular, conversation; and if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge, with abundance of thankfulness, the riches and power of his grace.

3. He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing; "*He has put a new song in my mouth*"; he has given me cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice." He was brought, as it were, into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God; for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never before received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put in his mouth.

IV. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and, for that end, he leaves it here upon record; *Many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord*. They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the Son of David, into that horrible pit; and shall say, *If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of David, with new songs of joy and praise. There is a holy, reverent, fear of God, which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of, our hope in him. They shall not fear him and shun him, but fear him and trust in him, in their greatest straits, not doubting but to find him as able and ready to help them as David did, in his distress. God's dealings with our Lord Jesus, are our great encouragement to trust in God; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for our sins, he demanded our debt from him; and when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he made it to appear that he had accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied with it; and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to *trust in him*? See Rom. iv. 25.—v. 1, 2.

The psalmist invites others to make God their Hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so; (v. 4.) "*Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his Trust*, and him only; that has great and good thoughts of him, and is entirely devoted to him, and respects not the proud; does not do as they do that trust in themselves, nor depends upon those who proudly encourage others to trust in them, for both the one and the other turn aside to lies, as indeed all those do that turn aside from God." This is applicable, particularly, to our faith in Christ. Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone, and respect not the proud Pharisees, that set up their own righteousness in competition with that, that will not be governed by their dictates, nor turn aside to lies, with the unbelieving Jews, who *submit not to the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 3. Blessed are they that escape this temptation.

2. The joyful sense he had of this mercy, led him to observe, with thankfulness, the many other favours he had received from God, v. 5. When God puts new songs into our mouth, we must not forget our former songs, but repeat them; "*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done*, both for me and others; this is but one of many." Many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence, and by the grace, of God. (1.) They are his works; not only the gifts of his bounty, but the operations

of his power; he works for us, he works in us, and thus he favours us with matter, not only for thanks, but for praise. (2.) They are his wonderful works; the contrivance of them admirable; his condescension to us, in bestowing them upon us, admirable; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. (3.) All his wonderful works are the product of his thoughts to us-ward. He does all, according to the counsel of his own will, (Eph. i. 11.) the purposes of his grace which he purposed in himself, Eph. iii. 11. They are the projects of infinite wisdom, the designs of everlasting love; (1 Cor. ii. 7. Jer. xxxi. 3.) *thoughts of good, and not of evil*, Jer. xxix. 11. His gifts and callings will *therefore* be without repentance, because they are not sudden resolves, but the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to us-ward. (4.) They are innumerable; they cannot be methodised, or reckoned up in order; there is an order in all God's works, but they are so many that present themselves to our view at once, that we know not where to begin, nor which to name next; the order of them, and their natural references and dependencies, and how the links of the golden chain are joined, are a mystery to us, and what we shall not be able to account for, till the veil be rent, and the mystery of God finished. Nor can they be counted, not the very heads of them; when we have said the most we can, of the wonders of divine love to us, we must conclude with an *Et cætera*, and adore the depth, despairing to find the bottom.

6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is written* of me; 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips. O LORD, thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

The psalmist, being struck with amazement at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is strangely carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excels all the rest, and is the foundation and fountain of all, that of our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's thoughts, which were to us-ward concerning that work, were the most curious, the most copious, the most gracious, and therefore to be most admired. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, (Heb. x. 5, &c.) and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions, of the Old Testament, there is more of Christ than perhaps the Old Testament saints were aware of; and when the apostle would show us the Redeemer's voluntary undertaking of his work, he does not fetch his account out of the book of God's secret counsels, which belong not to us, but from the things revealed. Observe,

I. The utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin, in order to our peace with God and our happiness in him; *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire*; thou wouldest not have the Redeemer to offer them; something he must have to offer, but not these; (Heb. viii. 3.) therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron, Heb. vii. 14.

Or, In the days of the Messiah, burnt-offering and sin-offering will be no longer required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all; even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them, for their own sake; they could not take away the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice; the life of a sheep, which is so much inferior in value to that of a man, (Matth. xii. 12.) could not pretend to be an equivalent, much less an expedient, to preserve the honour of God's government and laws, and repair the injury done to that honour by the sin of man. They could not take away the terror of sin, by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of sin, by sanctifying the nature; it was impossible, Heb. ix. 9.—x. 1.—4. What there was in them that was valuable, resulted from their reference to Jesus Christ, of whom they were types; shadows indeed, but shadows of good things to come, and trials of the faith and obedience of God's people, of their obedience to the law, and their faith in the gospel. But the Substance must come, which is Christ, who must bring that glory to God, and that grace to man, which it was impossible those sacrifices should ever do.

II. The designation of our Lord Jesus to the work and office of Mediator; *Mine ears hast thou opened*; God the Father disposed him to the undertaking, (Isa. l. 5, 6.) and then obliged him to go through with it. *Mine ear hast thou digged*. It is supposed to allude to the law and custom of binding servants to serve for ever, by boring their ear to the door-post; see Exod. xxi. 6. Our Lord Jesus was so in love with his undertaking, that he would not go out free from it, and therefore engaged them to persevere for ever in it; and, *for this reason*, he is able to save us to the uttermost, because he has engaged to serve his Father to the uttermost, who upholds him in it, Isa. xlii. 1.

III. His own voluntary consent to this undertaking; "*Then said I, Lo, I come*"; then, when sacrifice and offering would not do, rather than the work should be undone, I said, Lo, I come, to enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and to advance the interests of God's glory and kingdom." This bespeaks three things; 1. That he freely offered himself to this service, which he was under no engagement at all to, prior to his own voluntary susception. It was no sooner proposed to him, than, with the greatest cheerfulness, he consented to it, and was wonderfully well pleased with the undertaking; had he not been perfectly voluntary in it, he could not have been a Surety, he could not have been a Sacrifice; for it is by this will, (this *animus offerentis*—mind of the offerer,) that we are sanctified, Heb. x. 10. 2. That he firmly obliged himself to it; "I come; I promise to come in the fulness of time." And therefore the apostle says, "It was when he came into the world that he had an actual regard to this promise, by which he had engaged his heart to approach unto God." He thus entered into bonds, not only to show the greatness of his love, but because he was to have the honour of his undertaking before he had fully performed it. Though the price was not paid, it was secured to be paid, so that he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 3. That he frankly owned himself engaged; He said, *Lo, I come*, said it all along to the Old Testament saints, who therefore knew him by the title of ἐρχόμενος—*He that should come*. This word was the foundation on which they built their faith and hope, and which they looked and longed for the accomplishment of.

IV. The reason why he came, in pursuance of his undertaking; because, *in the volume of the book*

it was written of him, 1. In the close rolls of the divine decree and counsel; there it was written, that his ear was opened, and he said, *Lo, I come*, there the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son; and to that he had an eye in all he did, the commandment he received of his Father. 2. In the letters patent of the Old Testament, Moses and all the prophets testified of him; in all the volumes of that book something or other was written of him, which he had an eye to, that all might be accomplished, John xix. 28.

V. The pleasure he took in his undertaking; having freely offered himself to it, he did not fail, nor was discouraged, but proceeded with all possible satisfaction to himself; (v. 8, 9.) *I delight to do thy will, O my God*; it was, to Christ, his meat and drink to go on with this work appointed to him; (John iv. 34.) and the reason here given, is, *Thy law is within my heart*; it is written there, it rules there, it is an active commanding principle there. It is meant of the law, concerning the work and office of the Mediator, what he was to do and suffer; this law was dear to him, and had an influence upon him in his whole undertaking. Note, When the law of God is written in our hearts, our duty will be our delight.

VI. The publication of the gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, v. 9, 10. The same that, as a Priest, wrought out redemption for us, as a Prophet, by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his word and Spirit, makes it known to us. *The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord*, Heb. ii. 3. It is the gospel of Christ, that is preached to all nations. Observe, 1. What it is that is preached; it is righteousness, (v. 9.) God's righteousness, (v. 10.) the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in; (Dan. ix. 24.) compare Rom. i. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had long been looked for. It is God's loving-kindness and his truth, his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption, we ought to take notice how bright all the divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. 2. To whom it is preached; to the great congregation, (v. 9.) and again, v. 10. When Christ was here on earth, he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both. Solemn religious assemblies are a divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised, to the glory of God, and preached for the edification of men. 3. How it is preached; freely and openly; *I have not refrained my lips, I have not hid it, I have not concealed it*. This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ, would be in great temptation to hide it and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition; but Christ himself, and those whom he calls to that work, set their faces as a flint, (Isa. l. 7.) and were wonderfully carried on in it. It is well for us, that they were so, for by this means our eyes come to see this joyful light, and our ears to hear this joyful sound; which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me. 12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of my

head; therefore my heart faileth me. 13. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. 14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil. 15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha! 16. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. 17. But I am poor and needy; yet the LORD thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist, having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

I. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy; (v. 11.) "Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him; *withhold not thou thy tender mercies* then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not *with him also freely give us all things?*" (Rom. viii. 32.) *Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*" The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting loving-kindness and truth of God are that which we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, lxi. 7.

II. This may encourage us, in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, 1. The frightful sight he had of sin, v. 12. This was it that made the discovery he was now favoured with, of a Redeemer, very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about; in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him; look which way he would, he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bailiff does the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and *more than the hairs of his head*. Convinced, awakened, consciences are apprehensive of danger from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity, which seem small as hairs, but, being numerous, are very dangerous; *Who can understand his errors?* God numbers our hairs, (Matth. x. 30.) which yet we cannot number; so he keeps an account of our sins, which we keep no account of. The sight of sin so oppressed him, that he could not hold up his head; *I am not able to look up*, much less could he keep up his heart; *therefore my heart fails me*. Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. 2. The careful recourse he had to God, under the sense of sin; (v. 10.) seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion

does he cry out, "*Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; (v. 13.) O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in, through the apprehensions of that wrath; I am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous; therefore, O Lord, make haste to help me.*"

III. This may encourage us to hope for victory over our spiritual enemies, that seek after our souls to destroy them, (v. 14.) the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour. If Christ has triumphed over them, we, through him, shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this, we may pray, with humble boldness, *let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward, v. 14. Let them be desolate, v. 15.* Both the conversion of a sinner, and the glorification of a saint, are great disappointments to Satan, who does his utmost, with all his power and subtlety, to hinder both; now, our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray, that, both these ways, that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries, *Aha, aha*, thinking he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be *desolate, for a reward of his shame. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The accuser of the brethren is cast out.*

IV. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him, v. 16. See here, 1. The character of good people; conformably to the laws of natural religion, they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigencies apply themselves to him, as a people should seek unto their God; conformably to the laws of revealed religion, they love his salvation, that great salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out when he said, *Lo, I come*. All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. 2. The happiness secured to good people by this prophetic prayer; They that seek God shall rejoice and be glad in him, and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their bountiful Rewarder. They that love his salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and shall say continually, *The Lord be magnified*; and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth; blessed are they that are thus still praising God.

Lastly, This may encourage the saints, in distress and affliction, to trust in God, and comfort themselves in him, v. 17. David himself was one of these, *I am poor and needy*; a king, perhaps, now on the throne, and yet, being troubled in spirit, he calls himself *poor and needy*, lost and undone, without a Saviour; in want and distress, *yet the Lord thinketh upon me*, in and through the Mediator, by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them; but God's thoughts toward them, which he had spoken of, (v. 5.) are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their Help under their troubles, and will be, in due time, their Deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying; for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore, though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

PSALM XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery. David here found them so upon a sick bed; he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. 1. He here

comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, (v. 1. 3.) and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, v. 4. II. He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their malicious censures of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent conduct toward him, v. 5. 9. III. He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him; (v. 10, 11.) and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, v. 13. Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of this psalm. Is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may any of us, in singing it, meditate upon both the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **BLESSED** is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4. I said, O LORD, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

I. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and we may suppose that David makes mention of these, with application, either, 1. To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now that he was in affliction; *Blessed is he that considers poor David.* Here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up their good opinion of him and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounced this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction. The provocations which his enemies gave him did but endear his friends so much the more to him; or, 2. To himself; he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had considered the poor; that, when he was in honour and power at court, he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor, and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness. Here is a comment upon that promise; *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Observe,

(1.) What the mercy is which is required of us; it is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate: these we are to consider with prudence and tenderness; we must take notice of their affliction, and inquire into their state; must sympathize with them, and judge charitably concerning them; we must wisely consider the poor; we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be *Maschil* to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us, if we thus show mercy; He that considers the poor, (if he cannot relieve them, yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and, in relieving them, does it considerably and with discretion,) shall be considered by his God: he shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be *blessed upon the earth*; this branch of godliness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is usually recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving;

such as practise it may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God.

[1.] In all troubles; *He will deliver them in the day of evil*, so that, when the times are at the worst, it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, *they* shall. Those who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts, God will distinguish from those that have hard usage. Are they in danger? He will preserve and keep them alive; and those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, must acknowledge it as a great favour if they have their *lives given them for a prey*. He does not say, "*They shall be preferred*," but, "*They shall be preserved and kept alive*, when the arrows of death fly thick round about them." Do their enemies threaten them? God will not *deliver them into the will of their enemies*; and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us, but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us, is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men or devils! and that good-will we may promise ourselves an interest in, if we have considered the poor, and helped to relieve and rescue them.

[2.] Particularly in sickness; (v. 3.) *The Lord will strengthen him*, both in body and mind, *upon the bed of languishing*, on which he had long lain sick, and *he will make all his bed*; a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well-made which God himself has the making of. He will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; he will *turn his bed*, (so the word is,) to shake it up, and make it very easy; or, he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy, under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue; the soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease, when the body lies in pain.

II. David's prayer, directed and encouraged by these promises; (v. 4.) *I said, Heal my soul*. It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay, in our practices, any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, 1. His humble petition; *Lord, be merciful to me*. He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their Debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy. When we are under the rod, we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God; *Lord, heal my soul*. Sin is the sickness of the soul, pardoning mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for, than for bodily health. 2. His penitent confession; "*I have sinned against thee*, and therefore my soul needs healing; I am a sinner, a miserable sinner, therefore, *God, be merciful to me*," Luke xviii. 13. It does not appear that this has any reference to any particular gross act of sin, but, in general, to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, *Heal my soul*.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me; When

shall he die, and his name perish? 6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. 7. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more. 9. Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. 10. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent conduct of his enemies toward him, when he was sick, which, as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They were not, indeed, arrived at that modern pitch of wickedness, of poisoning his meat and drink, or giving him something to make him sick; but, when he was sick, they insulted over him; (v. 5.) *Mine enemies speak evil of me*; designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his interest.

I. They longed for his death; *When shall he die, and his name perish with him?* He had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that; but it was a useful life, he was, upon all accounts, the greatest ornament and blessing of his country; and yet, it seems, there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth*. We ought not to desire the death of any; but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent. They envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but, if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet, see how they were mistaken; when he had served his generation, he did die; (Acts xiii. 36.) but did his name perish? No, it lives and flourishes, to this day, in the sacred writings, and will, to the end of time; for the memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed.

II. They picked up every thing they could, to reproach him with; (v. 6.) *"If he come to see me,"* (as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick,) *"he speaks vanity"*; he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me, and to comfort me; he tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wishes me my health; but it is all flattery and falsehood." We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarcely any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems, by this, that the former days were no better than these: David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of; nor was that the worst of it; it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did, and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous; *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself*, puts

ill constructions upon every thing; and then, when he goes among his companions, he tells it them, that they may tell it others; *Report, say they, and we will report it*, Jer. xx. 13. If he complained much of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if he scarcely complained at all, they would reproach him for his stupidity. If he prayed, or gave them good counsel, they would banter it, and call it *canting*; if he kept silence from good, when the wicked were before him, they would say that he had forgotten his religion, now that he was sick. There is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity.

III. They promised themselves that he would never recover from this sickness, nor ever wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him; they *whispered together against him*, (v. 7.) speaking that secretly, in one another's ears, which they could not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew would be confuted; whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, Rom. i. 29, 30. They whispered, that their plot against him might not be discovered, and so defeated; there is seldom whispering, (we say,) but there is lying, or some mischief on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David; concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the public good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing: this he calls *devising hurt against him*; and they doubted not but to gain their point; *An evil disease, a thing of Belial*, say they, *cleaves fast unto him*; the reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped, would cleave so fast to it, that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point; they went by a modern maxim, *Portiter calumniari, aliquid adhererebit—Fling an abundance of calumny, and part will be sure to stick*. The disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial; or, it is inflicted by Satan, who is called *Belial*, the wicked one, 2 Cor. vi. 15. "It is" (according to a loose way of speaking some have) "a devilish disease, and therefore it will cleave fast to him, and now that he lieth, now that his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, he shall rise up no more, we shall be rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments." We are not to think it strange, if, when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, Rev. xi. 10.

IV. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies, and was as abusive to him as any of them; (v. 9.) *My own familiar friend*; probably, he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom friend, and prime minister of state, in whom he trusted as one invincibly firm to him, and whose advice he relied much upon, in dealing with his enemies, who did eat of his bread, with whom he had been very intimate, and whom he had taken to sit at the table with him: nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged, both in gratitude and interest, to adhere to him. They had their *maintenance from the king's palace*, did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour, (Ezra iv. 14.) much less to do him dishonour; yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's, forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him. Those are wicked indeed, whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not

think it strange, if we receive abuses from such: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor David here, in the Spirit, spake; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and *therefore* gave Judas the sop, that the scripture might be fulfilled; *He that eats bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me*, John xiii. 18, 26. Nay, have not we ourselves carried it thus perfidiously and disingenuously toward God? *We eat of his bread* daily, and yet *lift up the heel against him*, as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, Deut. xxxii. 15.

Now, how did David bear this insolent ill-natured carriage of his enemies toward him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God; *O Lord, be thou merciful to me*, for they are unmerciful, v. 10. He had prayed in reference to the guilt of his sins, (v. 4.) *Lord, be merciful to me*; and now again, in reference to the insults of his enemies, *Lord, be merciful to me*, for that prayer will suit every case. God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance; "They endeavour to run me down, but, Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never rise. Raise me up, that *I may requite them*, that I may render them good for evil;" so some; for that was David's practice, vii. 4.—xxxv. 13. A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him, but, on the contrary, that he is ready to do them any good office. Or, "That, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future;" which would be a necessary piece of justice, for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up, that he might be a just Avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed, not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed; (v. 11.) "*By this I know that thou favourest me* and my interest, *because mine enemy doth not triumph over me*." They hoped for his death, but he found himself, through mercy, recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery; (1.) That it would be a disappointment to his adversaries; they would be crest-fallen and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment, they would fret at it themselves. Note, Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us. (2.) That that would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us, in any mercy personal or public, that doubles it, and sweetens it.

3. He depends upon God, who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to *preserve him to his heavenly kingdom*, as blessed Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 18. "As for me, forasmuch as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and in order to that, settest me before thy face, hast thine eye always upon me for good;" or, "Because thou dost, by thy grace, uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt, in thy glory, set me for ever before thy face." Note, (1.) When at any time we suffer in our reputation, our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows, that if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies' triumphs over him. (2.) The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him

in it; for by his grace we are what we are; if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. (3.) It is a great comfort to us, that, however weak we are, God is able to *uphold us in our integrity*, and will do it, if we commit the keeping of it to him. (4.) If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity; his eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him. (5.) Those whom God now upholds in their integrity, he will set before his face for ever, and make happy in the vision and fruition of himself; *He that endures to the end, shall be saved*.

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as the *Lord God of Israel*, v. 13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm; if so, it teaches us this, That a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory, is enough to fill our hearts with joy, and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits; or, this verse may have been added as the conclusion of the first book of *Psalms*, which is reckoned to end here; the like being subjoined to lxxii, lxxxix, cvi, and then it teaches us to make God the Omega, who is the Alpha, to make him the End, who is the Beginning, of every good work. We are taught, (1.) To give glory to God as the *Lord God of Israel*, a God in covenant with his people; who has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. (2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness *from everlasting and to everlasting*. (3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit; intimated in the double seal set to it; *Amen and Amen*; Be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say, *Amen* to it, and let all others say, *Amen*, too.

PSALM XLII.

If the book of *Psalms* be, as some have styled it, a mirror, or looking-glass, of pious and devout affections, this psalm, in particular, deserves, as much as any one psalm, to be so entitled, and is as proper as any other to kindle and excite such in us: gracious desires are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are here struggling, but the pleasing passion comes off a conqueror. Or we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith: sense objecting, and faith answering. I. Faith begins with holy desires toward God, and communion with him, v. 1, 2. II. Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, v. 3, 4. III. Faith silences the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, v. 5. IV. Sense renews its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, v. 6, 7. V. Faith holds up the heart, notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, v. 8. VI. Sense repeats its lamentations, (v. 9, 10.) and sighs out the same remonstrance it had before made of its grievances. VII. Faith gets the last word, (v. 11.) for the silencing of the complaints of sense, and though it be almost the same with that, (v. 5.) yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title does not tell us who was the psalmist of this psalm, but, most probably, it was David; and we may conjecture it was penned by him at a time when, either by Saul's persecution, or Absalom's rebellion, he was driven from the sanctuary, and cut off from the privilege of waiting upon God in public ordinances. The strain of it is much the same with lxxiii., and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand, and upon the same or a like occasion. In singing it, if we be either in outward affliction, or in inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them, sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it, which express and excite holy desires toward God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

1. **A**S the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after

thee, O God. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God, as the Chief Good, and our Felicity, is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which, all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase: now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

I. Holy love, *thirsting*; love upon the wing, soaring upward in holy desires toward the Lord, and toward the remembrance of his name; (v. 1, 2.) "*My soul panteth, thirsteth, for God, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him.*" Now, observe,

1. When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire toward God. It was, (1.) When he was thus debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God; when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teaches us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and whets our appetite for the means of grace, by cutting us short in those means. We are apt to loathe that manna, when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us, if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. (2.) When he was deprived, in a great measure, of the inward comfort he used to have in God; he now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, If God, by his grace, has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires toward him, we may take comfort from these, when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God is as sure an evidence that we love him, as rejoicing in God. Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premises this, That he looked upon the living God as his Chief Good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and, casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

2. What is the Object of his desire, and what it is he thus thirsts after. (1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God; not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts, if it do not meet with God himself there; "*Oh that I knew where I might find him!*" That I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnestness of his glory." (2.) He has, herein, an eye to God, as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the Fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his; the living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God. (3.) He longs to come and appear before God; to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity; to attend on

him as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him, and receive his commands; to give an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright, as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts, but he must incur expense, for so was the law, that *none should appear before God empty*; yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

3. What is the degree of this desire. It is very importunate, it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts, which bespeaks not only the sincerity, but the strength, of his desire; his longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart, or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck, after the water-brooks. Thus earnestly does a gracious soul desire communion with God; thus impatient is it in the want of that communion; so impossible does it find it to take up in any thing short of that communion; and so insatiable is it in taking the pleasures of that communion, when the opportunity of it returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly kingdom.

II. Holy love, *mourning* for God's present withdrawals, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances; (v. 3.) "*My tears have been my meat day and night, during this forced absence from God's house.*" His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions, and returned the signs, of sorrow; even the royal prophet was a weeping prophet, when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were *his meat, day and night*; he fed, he feasted, upon his own tears, when there was such just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him, that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature. Observe, He did not think it enough to shed a tear or two, at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell-prayer, when he took his leave, but, as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight, he never looked up, but wept, day and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again.

Two things aggravated his grief:

1. The reproaches with which his enemies teased him; *They continually say unto me, Where is thy God?* (1.) Because he was absent from the ark, the token of God's presence; judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken, who think that, when they have robbed us of our Bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God: for though God has tied us to them, when they are to be had, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are, there is a way open heavenward. (2.) Because God did not immediately appear for his deliverance, they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived: it does not follow that the saints have lost their God, because they have lost all their other friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul, than that which is intended to shake its hope and confidence in God.

2. The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, v. 4. *Son, remember thy good things,* is a great aggravation of evil things; so much do our

powers of reflection and anticipation add to the grievance of this present time. David remembered the *days of old*, and then *his soul was poured out in him*; he melted away, and the thought almost broke his heart. He poured out his soul within him in sorrow, and then poured out his soul before God in prayer. But what was it that occasioned this painful melting of spirit? It was not the remembrance of the pleasures at court, or the entertainments of his own house, from which he was now banished, that afflicted him; but the remembrance of the free access he had formerly to God's house, and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there. (1.) He went to *the house of God*, though in his time it was but a tent; nay, if this psalm was penned, as many think it was, at the time of his being persecuted by Saul, the ark was then in a private house, 2 Sam. vi. 3. But the meanness, obscurity, and inconveniency, of the place, did not lessen his esteem of that sacred symbol of the divine presence. David was a courtier, a prince, a man of honour, a man of business, and yet very diligent in attending God's house, and joining in public ordinances; even in the days of Saul, when he and his great men *inquired not at it*, 1 Chron. xiii. 3. Whatever others did, David and his house would serve the Lord. (2.) He went with the multitude, and thought it no disparagement to his dignity, to be at the head of a crowd in attending upon God. Nay, this added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude, and therefore it is twice mentioned, as that which he greatly lamented the want of now. The more the better, in the service of God; it is the more like to heaven, and a sensible help to our comfort in the communion of saints. (3.) He went with the *voice of joy and praise*; not only with joy and praise in his heart, but with the outward expressions of it, proclaiming his joy, and speaking forth the high praises of his God. Note, When we wait upon God in public ordinances, we have reason to do it both with cheerfulness and thankfulness, to take to ourselves the comfort, and give to God the glory, of our liberty of access to him. (4.) He went to keep holy-days, not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

III. Holy love, *hoping*; (v. 5.) *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not exceed its due limits, nor prevail to depress his spirits; he therefore communes with his own heart, for his relief: "Come, my soul, I have something to say to thee in thy heaviness." Let us consider, 1. The cause of it. "Thou art cast down, as one stooping and sinking under a burthen, Prov. xii. 25. Thou art disquieted, in confusion and disorder; now, why art thou so?" This may be taken as an inquiring question; "Let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed; is it a just cause?" Our disquietudes would often vanish before a strict scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of them. "*Why am I cast down?*" Is there a cause, a real cause? Have not others more cause, that do not make so much ado? Have not we, at the same time, cause to be encouraged?" Or it may be taken as an expostulating question; those that commune much with their own hearts, will often have occasion to chide them, as David did here. Why do I thus dishonour God by my melancholy dejections? Why do I discourage others, and do so much injury to myself? Can I give a good account of this tumult?" 2. The cure of it; *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him*. A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency, and disquiet of spirit. And therefore, when we chide ourselves

for our dejections, we must charge ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces itself, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head above water. *Hope in God, (1.)* That he shall have glory from us; "*I shall yet praise him*; I shall experience such a change in my estate, that I shall not want matter for praise; and such a change in my spirit, that I shall not want a heart for praise." It is the greatest honour and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire and hope of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's bliss but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent, or abate, our endless hallelujahs? (2.) That we shall have comfort in him. We shall praise him for the help of his countenance; for his favour, and the support we have by it, and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance, will find in that a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient, help, in the worst of times, and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking, nay, it kept him from drooping; his harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy, but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. 7. Deep calleteth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. 8. Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. 9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 10. As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? 11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like day and night, in the course of nature.

I. He complains of the dejections of his spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, v. 6. 1. In his troubles; his soul was dejected, and he goes to God, and tells him so, *O my God, my soul is cast down within me*. It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and may open to him the causes of our dejection. David had communed with his own heart about his own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; and therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. Note, When we cannot get relief for our burthened spirits, by pleading with ourselves, we should try what we can do, by praying to God, and leaving our case with him. We cannot still these winds and waves; but we know who can. 2. In his devotions; his soul was elevated, and, finding the disease very painful, he had recourse to that as a sovereign remedy. "*My*

soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, I will remember thee, meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and try what that will do to keep up my spirit." Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries, is, to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case, when the psalmist remembered God, and was troubled, lxxvii. 3. He had often remembered God, and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself there from the rage of his persecutors; sometimes to the country about Jordan, when discovered there, to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called *Mizar*, or the little hill; but, (1.) Wherever he went, he took his religion along with him; in all these places, he remembered God, and lifted up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of those that are strangers in a strange land, that *Undique ad cælos tantundem est vis—Wherever they are there is a way open heavenward.* (2.) Wherever he was, he retained his affection for the courts of God's house; from the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills, he used to look a long look, a longing look, toward the place of the sanctuary, and wish himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon, and which lay so near it.

II. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

1. He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him; (v. 7.) "*Deep calls unto deep*, one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it; and thy water-spouts give the signal, and sound the alarm, of war." It may be meant of the terrors and tosses of his mind, under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people; he was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or, it is an allusion to a ship at sea, in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, cvii. 25. Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time, we must call them *God's waves* and *his billows*, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope, that, though we be threatened, we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check, *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters.* Let not good men think it strange, if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thick upon them; God knows what he does, and so shall they shortly. Jonah, in the whale's belly, made use of these words of David, Jon. ii. 3. (they are exactly the same in the original,) and of him they were literally true, *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*; for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

2. He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour; (v. 8.) *Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness.* Things are bad, but they shall not always be so; *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though affairs are now in an evil plight, they may not always be so.* After the storm, there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him, when deep called unto deep. Observe, (1.) What he promised himself from God: *The Lord will command his loving-kindness.* He eyes the favour of God, as the fountain of all the good he looked for, that is life, that is better than life; and with that, God will gather those from whom he

has, in a little wrath, hid his face, Isa. liv. 7, 8. God's conferring of his favour, is called his *commanding*; this intimates the freeness of it, we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty, he gives like a king; it intimates also the efficacy of it; he speaks his loving-kindness, and makes us to hear it; speaks, and it is done. He *commands deliverance*, (xlv. 4.) *commands the blessing*, (cxxxiii. 3.) as one having authority. By commanding his loving-kindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do in the day-time, for God's loving-kindness will make day in the soul, at any time. Though weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning. (2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his loving-kindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome with his best affections and devotions. [1.] He will rejoice in God; *In the night, his song shall be with me.* The mercies we receive in the day, we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping, we should be praising God. See cxix. 62. *At midnight, will I rise to give thanks.* In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction; "Before the day dawns, in which God commands his loving-kindness, I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it." Even in tribulation, the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God; sing in hope, and praise in hope, Rom. v. 2, 3. It is God's prerogative to give songs in the night, Job xxxv. 10. [2.] He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him; *My prayer shall be to the God of my life.* Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken, our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the Author and Giver of all our comforts; and therefore to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer, but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers, in them to eye God as the God of our life; for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

III. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his Friend, v. 9-11.

1. His complaint is, that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. (1.) They oppressed him to that degree, that he went mourning, from day to day, from place to place, v. 9. He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him, it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself persecuted and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it. Yet David ought not hence to have concluded that God had forgotten him, and cast him off, nor thus to have expostulated with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be trampled upon, as they did that trampled upon him; *Why go I mourning? And why hast thou forgotten me?* We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him. (2.) They reproached him so cuttingly, that it was a sword in his bones, v. 10. He had mentioned before what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it, *Thou saw daily unto me, Where is thy God?* A reproach which was therefore very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God, and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of itself.

2. His comfort is, that God is his Rock, v. 9.

A Rock to build upon, a Rock to take shelter in; the Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his Rock, his Strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. To him he had access with confidence, to God his Rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had said, (v. 5.) and concludes with it, (v. 11.) *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome, they were not silenced, though they were again and again answered; but here, at length, his faith came off a conqueror, and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory, (1.) By repeating what he had before said; chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietudes, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us, to think our good thoughts over again, and if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our hearts, and all little enough. (2.) By adding one word to it; *there*, he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; *here*, "I will praise him," says he, "as the Salvation of my countenance, from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round, with pleasure." He adds, *and my God*, "related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has, is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise;" this thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears; God's being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will *wipe away all tears from their eyes*, Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

PSALM XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and, having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it; the malady presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book, with a *probatum est* upon it. The 2d verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the 9th verse of the foregoing psalm, as the 5th of this is exactly the same with the 11th of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion, prayed a second and third time, *saying the same words*, *Matth. xxvi. 44*. In this psalm, I. He appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, v. 1, 2. II. He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again, and promises to make a good improvement of them, v. 3, 4. III. He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit, with a lively hope and confidence in God; (v. 5.) If, in singing this psalm, we labour after these, we sing with grace in our hearts.

I. **JUDGE** me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2. For thou *art* the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise

him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

David here makes his application to God by faith and prayer, as his Judge, his Strength, his Guide, his Joy, his Hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

I. As his Judge, his righteous Judge, who, he knew, would judge him, and who, (being conscious of his own integrity,) he knew, would judge for him; (v. 1.) *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause*. There were those that impeached him, against whom he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature; praying to have their judgment given against him, reversed, and his innocency cleared. There were those that had injured him, against whom he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the Avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself, and upon them. Observe, 1. Who his enemies were, with whom he had this struggle. Here was a sinful body of men, whom he calls an *ungodly or unmerciful* nation; those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly, for those that have any fear or love of their master will have compassion on their fellow-servants. And here was one bad man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man; most probably, Saul, who not only showed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, and nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; to them it was very applicable, but only as other like scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no. 2. What is his prayer with reference to them; *Judge me*. As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, "*Enter not into judgment with me*, for then I shall be condemned;" but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, "*Lord, judge me*, for I know that I shall be justified, *plead my cause against them*, take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf." He that has an honest cause may expect that God will plead it. "*Plead my cause so as to deliver me from them*, that they may not have their will against me." We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we be delivered, though our enemies be not destroyed.

II. As his Strength, his all-sufficient Strength; so he eyes God, (v. 2.) "*Thou art the God of my strength, my God, my Strength*, from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, who hast often strengthened me, and without whom I am weak as water, and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee." David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God to be the God of his strength. If we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual delights. David here pleads this with God; "*Thou art the God on whom I depend as my Strength; why then dost thou cast me off?*" This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have had of their own state. "*Thou art the God of my strength; why then is mine enemy too strong for me, and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power?*" It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's ene-

mies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

III. As his Guide, his faithful Guide; (v. 3.) *Lead me, bring me to thy holy hill.* He prays, 1. That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment, and open a way for him again to the free enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the *holy hills and the tabernacles*, not upon his family-comforts, his court-preferences, or his diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again; nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would be brought back. In order to this, he prays, "*Send out thy light and thy truth; let me have this as a fruit of thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth.*" We need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note, Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves. 2. That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world. Some of the Jewish writers by the *light and truth* here understand Messiah the Prince, and Elias his forerunner; these are come in answer to the prayers of the Old Testament; but we are still to pray for God's light and truth, the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations; and if we conscientiously follow that light and that truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

IV. As his Joy, his exceeding Joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do; *Then will I go unto the altar of God, v. 4.* He will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding Joy. Note, 1. Those that come to the tabernacles, should come to the altar; those that come to ordinances, should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave, to God, the better. 2. Those that come to the altar of God, must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart: we come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. 3. Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding Joy, not only as their future Bliss, but as their present Joy; and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The phrase, in the original, is very emphatical—*unto God the Gladness of my joy, or of my triumph.* Whatever we rejoice or triumph in, God must be the Joy of it; all our joy in it must terminate in him, and must pass through the gift to the Giver. 4. When we come to God as our exceeding Joy, our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises to him as God, and our God. *Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.* David excelled at the harp; (1 Sam. xvi. 16, 18.) and with that in which he excelled he would praise God; for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should, who is the best.

V. As his Hope, his never-failing Hope, v. 5.

Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* He then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God; *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him;* and of enjoying glory with God, *He is the Health of my countenance, and my God.* This is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

PSALM XLIV

We are not told either who was the penman of this psalm, or when, and upon what occasion, it was penned; upon a melancholy occasion, we are sure, not so much to the penman himself, (then we could have found occasions enough for it in the history of David and his afflictions,) but to the church of God in general; and therefore, if we suppose it penned by David, yet we must attribute it purely to the spirit of prophecy, and must conclude that that spirit (whatever he himself had) had in view the captivity of Babylon, or the sufferings of the Jewish church under Antiochus, or rather, the afflicted state of the Christian church in its early days, (to which v. 22. is applied by the apostle, *Rom. viii. 36.*) and indeed in all its days on earth, for it is its determined lot, that it must enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. And if we have any gospel-psalms pointing at the privileges and comforts of Christians, why should we not have one pointing at their trials and exercises? It is a psalm calculated for a day of fasting and humiliation, upon occasion of some public calamity, either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught, 1. To own with thankfulness, to the glory of God, the great things God had done for their fathers, v. 1. . 8. II. To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, v. 9. . 16. III. To file a protestation of their integrity and adherence to God, notwithstanding, v. 17. . 22. IV. To lodge a petition at the throne of grace for succour and relief, v. 22. . 26. In singing this psalm, we ought to give God the praise of what he has formerly done for his people, to represent our own grievances, or sympathize with those parts of the church that are in distress, to engage ourselves, whatever happens, to cleave to God and duty, and then cheerfully to wait the event.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

1. **WE** have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old;* 2. *How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.* 3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. 5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. 6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

Some observe, that most of the psalms that are entitled *Maschil, psalms of instruction*, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sor-

row of spirit opens the ear to them; *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.*

In these verses, the church, though now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, of her triumph in God, and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here, 1. As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lie very heavy on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must needs be most grievous to those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour. 2. As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity, and return in mercy to them; accordingly he mixes prayers and comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

1. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them. In general; (*v. 1.*) *Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days.* Observe, 1. The many operations of providence are here spoken of as one work; "They have told us the *work* which thou didst;" for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God does, and the many wheels make but one wheel; (*Ezek. x. 13.*) many works make but one work. 2. It is a debt which every age owes to posterity, to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and to transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Those that went before us told us what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus shall *one generation praise his works to another*; (*cxlv. 4.*) *the fathers of the children shall make known his truth*, *Isa. xxxviii. 19.* 3. We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves and our children with what he did in the times of old, long before our own days; and of this we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. 4. Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that which will be of great use to them. 5. Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See how Gideon insists upon it, *Judg. vi. 13. Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?* In particular, their fathers had told them,

(1.) How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, *v. 2, 3.* He drove out the natives, to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword, and as driven stubble to their bow. The many complete victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them; [1.] They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace; *It was through the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them. Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, doth God drive them out from before thee*, (*Deut. ix. 5, 6.*) but because God would *perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers*, *Deut. vii. 8.* The less praise this allows us, the more comfort it administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God and the light of his countenance. [2.] They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours had been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites, and put to shame; but it was God's

right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously. It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promises himself fruit. See *lxxx. 8.* This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little, not by any human policy or power, (for God chose not to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world,) but by the wisdom and power of God; Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny; for to the state of the church under the power of the New Testament Babylon, some think, (and particularly the learned Amyraldus,) the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world, will certainly support it by the same power and goodness; and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land; (*v. 7.*) *Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, them that hated us*; witness the successes of the Judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, *Acts vi. 10.*

II. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

1. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection; (*v. 4.*) *Thou art my King, O God.* He speaks in the name of the church, as (*lxxiv. 12.*) *Thou art my King of old*; God, as a king, has made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it; pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute; or, the psalmist speaks for himself here; "Lord, *Thou art my King*, Whither shall I go with my petitions, but to thee? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church." Note, It is every one's duty to improve his personal interest at the throne of grace, for the public welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, "If I have found grace in thy sight, guide thy people," *Exod. xxxiii. 13.*

2. They had always applied themselves to him by prayer for deliverance, when at any time they were in distress; *Command deliverances for Jacob.* Observe, (1.) The enlargedness of their desire; they pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were, a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. 2. The strength of their faith in the power of God; they do not say, *Work deliverances*, but, *Command them*, which denotes his doing it easily and instantly; *Speak, and it is done*; such was the faith of the centurion, (*Matth. viii. 8.*) *Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*; it denotes also his doing it effectually; "Command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed;" *Where the word of a king is*, there is power, much more the word of the King of kings.

3. They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them, (*v. 3.*) so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future; (*v. 6.*) "I will not trust in my bow, nor in any

of my military preparations, as if those would stand me instead without God; no, *through thee will we push down our enemies*; (v. 5.) we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and, having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt. *Through thy name*, by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us, and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us, we shall, *we will, tread them under that rise up against us.*"

4. They had made him their Joy and Praise; (v. 8.) "*In God we have boasted*, in him we do, and will boast, every day, and all the day long." When their enemies boasted of their strength and success, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hectoring Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of, in answer thereunto, but their relation to God, and their interest in him; and if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance. *Let him that glories, glory in the Lord*, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God, make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted; let them *boast in him all the day long*, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed for meat*; and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price. 13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. 15. My confusion is *continually* before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, 16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were now in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because *they* were now trampled upon, who had always been used, in their struggles with their neighbours, to win the day and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors, whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries; and especially because they had boasted in their God, with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

I. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them, and presence with them; (v. 9.) "*Thou hast cast off*; thou seemest to have cast us off, and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us, and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour. Our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight, we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for, if thou didst, which way soever they

turned, they would prosper; but it is quite contrary." Note, God's people, when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid*, Rom. xi. 1.

II. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle; (v. 10.) *Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy*, as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai; (J. sh. vii. 8.) "We are dispirited, and have lost the ancient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall, before those that used to flee and fall before us; and then they that hate us have the plunder of our camp, and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them."

III. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity; (v. 11.) "*Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat*. They make no more scruple of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it, as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice, or in danger of being infected by their iniquities." They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, *Thou sellest thy people*, when they should have charged it upon their own sin; *For your iniquities have you sold yourselves*, Isa. i. 1. However, thus far was right, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, *but what was given them from above*; they own it was God that *delivered them into the hands of the ungodly*, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. *Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price*; so it may be read; "Thou dost not sell them by auction, to those that will bid most for them, but in haste, to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will." Or, as we read it, *Thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price*; intimating, that they could have suffered this contentedly, if they had been sure that it would have redounded to the glory of God, and that his interest might have been some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary, Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour; so that he was so far from being a Gainer in his glory by the sale of them, that it should seem he was greatly a Loser by it; see Isa. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 20.

IV. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy was put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God, "*Thou makest us a reproach*; thou bringest those calamities upon us which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us." They complain, 1. That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. 2. That their neighbours, those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, v. 13. 3. That the heathen, the people that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a by-word, and shook the head at them, as triumphing in their fall, v. 14. 4. That the reproach was constant and incessant; (v. 15.) *My confusion is continually before me*. The church in general, the psalmist in particular, were continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy. To those that are going down, every one cries, "Down with them." 5. That it was very grievous, and in

a manner overwhelmed him; *The shame of my face has covered me.* He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing. 6. That it reflected upon God himself; the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them, was downright blasphemy against God, v. 16. and 2 Kings xix. 3. There was therefore strong reason to believe that God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenuous mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26. Arise for our help, and redeem us, for thy mercies' sake.

The people of God, being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply themselves to him; whither else should they go?

I. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity, which he only is an infallible Judge of, and which he will certainly be the Reward of.

Two things they call God to witness to.

1. That though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God, and to their duty; (v. 17.) "*All this is come upon us, and it is as bad perhaps as bad can be, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither cast off the thoughts of thee, nor deserted the worship of thee; for though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt foolishly in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off, and take to other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us, and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee.*" The trouble they had been long in was very great; "*We have been sore-broken in the place of dragons, among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel, as dragons; we have been covered with the shadow of death, we have been under deep melancholy, and apprehensive of nothing short of death; we have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us; (v. 19.) yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service; though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee; our heart is not turned back, we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship, or in*

our conversation, *declined from thy way, (v. 16.) the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in.*" When the heart turns back, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us, if we do not leave him.

For the proof of their integrity, they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart, as it is the terror of hypocrites; (v. 20, 21.) "*If we have forgotten the name of our God, under pretence that he had forgotten us; or, in our distress, have stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, shall not God search this out? Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly, than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it?*" Forgetting God was a heart sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, Ezek. viii. 12. But heart sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for *he knows the secrets of the heart*, and therefore is an infallible Judge of the words and actions.

2. That therefore they suffered these hard things, because they kept close to God and to their duty; (v. 22.) "*It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long, because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods.*" In this, the Spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered, even unto death, for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, Rom. viii. 36. So many were killed, and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised, that, when a man became a Christian, he reckoned himself as a *sheep appointed for the slaughter*.

II. By way of petition, with reference to their present distress, that God would, in his own due time, work deliverance for them. Their request is very importunate, *Awake, arise, v. 23. Arise for our help, redeem us; (v. 26.)* come speedily and powerfully to our relief, lxxx. 2. *Stir up thy strength, and come and save us.* They complained, (v. 12.) that God had sold them; here they pray, (v. 26.) that God would redeem them, for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him; if he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears, must heal, that smites, must bind up, Hos. vi. 1. They complained, (v. 9.) *Thou hast cast us off;* but here they pray, (v. 23.) "*Cast us not off for ever;* let us not be finally forsaken of God." The expostulations are very moving; *Why sleepest thou? v. 23.* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when he does not immediately appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative, as (lxxxviii. 65.) *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep;* but it was applicable to Christ in the letter; (Matth. viii. 24.) he was asleep when his disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, *Lord, save us, we perish.* "*Wherefore hidest thou thy face,* that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance?" Or, "that thou mayest not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance."

And lastly, The pleas are very proper; not their own merit and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinner's pleas.

1. Their own misery, which made them the proper objects of the divine compassion; (v. 25.) "*Our soul is bowed down to the dust, under prevailing grief and fear; we are become as creeping things, the most despicable animals, our belly cleaves unto the earth, we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits, nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe.*" 2. God's mercy; "*O redeem us for thy mercy-sake; we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) and upon those sure mercies of David, which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed.*"

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the Prince: it is all over gospel, and points at him only, as a Bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a king ruling in it, and ruling for it. It is probable that our Saviour has reference to this psalm when he compares the kingdom of heaven, more than once, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, *Matth. xxii. 2.—xxv. 1.* We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; if I thought it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and his church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such a one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not. But I take it to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him (v. 6, 7.) it is applied in the New Testament, (*Heb. i. 8.*) nor can it be understood of any other. The preface speaks the excellency of the song, v. 1. The psalm speaks, 1. Of the royal Bridegroom, who is Christ. 1. The transcendent excellency of his person, v. 2. 2. The glory of his victories, v. 3. 5. 3. The righteousness of his government, v. 6, 7. 4. The splendour of his court, v. 8, 9. 11. Of the royal bride, which is the church. 1. Her consent gained, v. 10, 11. 2. The nuptials solemnized, v. 12. 15. 3. The issue of this marriage, v. 16, 17. In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of Christ, with an entire submission to, and satisfaction in, his government, and with an earnest desire of the enlarging and perpetuating of his church in the world.

To the chief musician upon *Shoshannim*, for the sons of *Korah*, *Maschil*. A song of loves.

1. **M**Y heart is inditing a good matter: I have made speaking the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make *Shoshannim*, in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which, probably, were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ, who calls himself the *Rose of Sharon*, and the *Lily of the valleys*, Cant. ii. 1. It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a song of the well-beloved, the virgins, the companions of the bride, (v. 14.) prepared to be sung by them; the virgin company, that at-

tend the Lamb on mount Zion, are said to sing a new song, Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

The preface (v. 1.) speaks, 1. The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is pity that such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about a bad matter. It is touching the King, King Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ, speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. 2. The excellency of the management; this song was a confession with the mouth, of faith in the heart, concerning Christ and his church. (1.) The matter was well digested, as it well deserved; *My heart is inditing it*; which, perhaps, is meant of that Spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David; that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spake. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought, and a fire of holy love; especially when we are to speak of those things. We then speak best of Christ and divine things, when we speak, from the heart, that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss. See Eccl. v. 2. (2.) It was well expressed; *I will speak of the things which I have made*. He would express himself, [1.] With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand, and was affected with, the things he spake of. Not, "I will speak the things I have heard from others," that is speaking by rote; but, "the things which I have myself studied." Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, *lxvi. 16.* [2.] With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency; "*My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer*, guided by my heart in every word, as the pen is by the hand." We call the prophets the *penmen* of scripture, whereas really they were but the *pen*. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleases. Why should we quarrel with the pen, if bitter things be written against us; or idolize the pen, if it write in our favour? David not only spake what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the further, and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter, it is pity but the tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer, to leave it upon record.

In these verses, the Lord Jesus is represented, 1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage song; and therefore the transcendent excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal Bridegroom; (v. 2.) *Thou art fairer than the children of men*, than any of them. He proposed (v. 1.) to speak of the King, but immediately directs his speech to him. They that have an admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith, that we see his beauty, and our love, that we are pleased with it; *Thou art fair*, thou art fairer than the children of men. Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of human nature in general, and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love, than there is or can be in any creature. Our Beloved is more than another be-

loved. The beauties of this lower world, and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excels them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

II. As the great Favourite of heaven. He is fairer than the children of men, for God has done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passes through his hands, through his mouth. 1. He has grace, and he has it for us; *grace is poured into thy lips*. By his word, his promise, his gospel, the *good will of God* is made known to us, and the *good work of God* is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, John i. 16. It was not only poured into his heart, for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace, poured into his lips, proceeded those gracious words which all admired, Luke iv. 22. The gospel of grace is poured into his lips, for it *began to be spoken by the Lord*, and from him we receive it, he has the words of eternal life. *The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips*; so the Chaldee. 2. He has the blessing, and he has it for us. "Therefore, because thou art the great Trustee of divine grace, for the use and benefit of the children of men, therefore God has blessed thee for ever, has made thee an everlasting Blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Where God gives his grace, he will give his blessing; we are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 3.

III. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal Bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle, (as was allowed by the law, Deut. xxiv. 5.) nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity; to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

1. His preparations for war; (v. 3.) *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty*. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit; by the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ, and become his loyal subjects; by the threatenings of that word, and the judgments executed according to them, those that stand it out against Christ, will, in due time, be brought down and ruined. By the gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and, at length, the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the predictions of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished. The sword here girt on Christ's thigh, is the same which is said to *proceed out of his mouth*, Rev. xix. 15. When the gospel was sent forth to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer *girded his sword upon his thigh*.

2. His expedition to this holy war; *He goes forth with his glory and his majesty*, as a great king takes the field with abundance of pomp and magnificence; his sword, his glory, and majesty. In his gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men, for he had no form nor comeliness, nothing to awe men, for he *took upon him the form of a servant*; it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty. There is so much grace, and therefore glory, in that word, *He that*

believes shall be saved; so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, *He that believes not, shall be damned*; that we may well say, in the chariot of that gospel, which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. In thy majesty ride prosperously, v. 4.

Prosper thou; ride thou; this speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper according to the good pleasure of the Lord; that he should divide the spoil with the strong, in recompense of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper to whom God says, *Prosper*, Isa. lii. 10-12. And it denotes the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him: *Thy kingdom come*; Go on and prosper.

3. The glorious cause in which he is engaged; *because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness*, which were, in a manner, sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue.

(1.) The gospel itself is *truth, meekness, and righteousness*, it commands by the power of truth and righteousness; for Christianity has these, incontestably, on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. 2 Tim. ii. 25. (2.) Christ appears in it, in his *truth, meekness, and righteousness*, and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is true, to learn of him because he is meek; (Matth. xi. 29.) the gentleness of Christ is of mighty force, 2 Cor. x. 1. Men are brought to submit to him because he is righteous, and rules with equity. (3.) The gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts *truth, meekness, and righteousness*, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore those glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of those just and rightful rulers under him, that by error, malice, and iniquity, had been deposed.

4. The success of his expedition; "*Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things*; thou shalt experience a wonderful divine power going along with thy gospel, to make it victorious; and the effects of it will be terrible things." (1.) In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him, there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations; this is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, John xvi. 8. (2.) In the conquest of the gates of hell, and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things will be done, which will make *men's hearts fail them for fear*, (Luke xxi. 26.) and great men and chief captains call to the *rocks and mountains to fall on them*, Rev. vi. 15. The next verse describes these terrible things; (v. 5.) *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies*. [1.] Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being reduced and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. They that thus fall on this stone shall be broken, Matth. xxi. 44. [2.] Those that persist in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God's terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him, so as to be made his footstool, ex. 1. These that would not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him; (Luke xix. 27.) those that would not submit to his golden sceptre shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod

6. Thy throne, O God, *is for ever and ever*: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is a right sceptre*. 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8. All thy garments *smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia*, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. 9. Kings' daughters *were among thy honourable women*: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here the royal Bridegroom filling his throne with judgment, and keeping his court with splendour.

I. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that says to the Son here, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*; as appears Heb. i. 8, 9. where this is quoted to prove that he is God, and has a *more excellent name than the angels*. The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government, observe,

1. The eternity of it; it is *for ever and ever*. It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and, in the blessed fruits and consequences of it, it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. Perhaps, even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression; for it is promised, that not only of his government, but of the *increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end*; (Isa. ix. 7.) even then when the kingdom shall be *delivered up to God, even the Father*, (1 Cor. xv. 24.) the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

2. The equity of it; *The sceptre of thy kingdom*, the administration of thy government is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil. Whatever Christ does, he does none of his subjects any wrong, but rights those that do suffer wrong; *He loves righteousness and hates wickedness, v. 7*. He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness: and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness: by the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness, (for, by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness,) and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

3. The establishment and elevation of it; *Therefore God, even thy God, (Christ, as Mediator, called God his God, (John xx. 17.) as commissioned by him, and the Head of those that are taken into covenant with him, he has anointed thee with the oil of gladness; therefore, that is, (1.) "In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that divine unction, to qualify thee for thine undertaking," Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. What God called him to he fitted him for, Isa. xi. 2. The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled, in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. (2.) "In recompense of what thou hast done and suffered*

for the advancement of righteousness, and the destruction of sin, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, has brought thee to all the honours and all the joys of thine exalted state;" because he *humbled himself, God has highly exalted him*, Phil. ii. 8, 9. His anointing him, denotes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah; and his anointing him with the oil of gladness, denotes the joy that was set before him, (so his exaltation is expressed, Heb. xii. 2.) both in the light of his *Father's countenance*, (Acts ii. 28.) and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see, and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. This he is anointed with *above all his fellows*, above all believers, who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing; they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it, to prove his pre-eminence above the angels, Heb. i. 4, 9. The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels, (Luke xv. 10.) but much more of the Son.

II. He keeps his court with splendour and magnificence.

1. His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of, not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness, and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed; (*v. 8.*) *They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia*; of these was compounded the *oil of gladness*, with which he and his garments were anointed: these were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use, (Exod. xxx. 23, 24.) which was typical of the unction of the Spirit, which Christ, the great High-Priest of our profession, received, and to which therefore there seems to be a reference. It is the savour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draw souls to him, (Cant. i. 3, 4.) and makes him *precious to believers*, 1 Pet. ii. 7.

2. His royal palaces are said to be *ivory ones*, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, 1 Kings xxii. 39. The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces, whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

3. The beauties of his court shine very bright. In public appearances at court, when the pomp of it is showed, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendour of the ladies, which is alluded to here, *v. 9*.

(1.) Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed in honour of the sovereign; *Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women*, whose looks and mien, and ornaments, we may suppose, by the height of their extraction, to excel all others. All true believers are born from above; they are the children of the King of kings, these attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of kings' daughters among his honourable women, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings, whose daughters they were, should be tributaries to him, and dependants on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him.

(2.) The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself; the queen-consort, whom, by an everlasting covenant, he hath betrothed to himself; she stands *at his right hand*, near to him, and receiving honour from him, in the richest array, *in gold of Ophir*, in

robes woven with gold thread, or with a gold chain, and other ornaments of gold. This is the *bride, the Lamb's wife*, whose graces, which are her ornaments, are compared to *fine linen, clean and white*, (Rev. xix. 8.) for their purity; here to *gold of Ophir*, for their costliness; for as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the *precious blood of the Son of God*.

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; 11. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy LORD, and worship thou him. 12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. 13. The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. 14. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. 15. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. 16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. 17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal Bridegroom. God, who said to the Son, *Thy throne is for ever and ever*, says this to the church, whom, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his *daughter*.

1. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus; "Hearken therefore, and consider this, and incline thine ear; submit to those conditions of thine espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them." This is the method of profiting by the word of God; *He that has ears, let him hear*, let him hearken diligently; he that hearkens, let him consider and weigh it duly; he that considers, let him incline and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

1. She must renounce all others; "*Forget thine own people and thy father's house*," according to the law of marriage. Retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance, not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer, as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom." When Abraham, in obedience to God's call, had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as *mindful of the country whence he came out*. This shows, (1.) How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or Paganism to the faith of Christ, wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession, either the Jewish ceremonies, or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had. (2.) How necessary it is for us all, when we give up our names to Jesus Christ, to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, Luke xiv. 26.

Here is good encouragement given to the royal bride, thus entirely to break off from her former

alliances; *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*; which intimates that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty, and would hazard her interest in the affections of the royal Bridegroom; but that if she entirely conform to his will, he would delight in her; the beauty of holiness, both on the church, and on particular believers, is, in the sight of Christ, of great price and very amiable. Where that is, he says, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*. Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, Rev. ii. 1.

2. She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him: *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*. The church is to be subject to Christ, as the wife to the husband, (Eph. v. 24.) to call him *Lord*, as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him, (1 Pet. iii. 6.) and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours; we must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father; if we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 11.

II. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her; (v. 12.) "*The daughter of Tyre*," a rich and splendid city, "*the daughter of the King of Tyre shall be there with a gift*; every royal family round about shall send a branch as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour, and to make an interest in thee; *even the rich among the people*, whose wealth might be thought to discharge them from dependence at court, even they shall entreat thy favour, for his sake, to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their Friend;" the Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb, (as rich as a Jew,) shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall know that *Christ has loved her*, Rev. iii. 9. When the Gentiles, being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then *come with a gift*, 2 Cor. viii. 5. Rom. xv. 16. When with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom, they then *come with a gift*.

2. She shall be very splendid, and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, (1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire; (v. 13.) *The king's daughter is all glorious within*. Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the view of a carnal eye; as their life, so their glory, is hid with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it, highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which *makes a fair show in the flesh*, but which is in the *hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible*, (1 Pet. iii. 4.) *whose praise is not of men, but of God*, Rom. ii. 29. (2.) For her rich apparel; though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet *her clothing also is of wrought gold*; the conversation of Christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy; (v. 14, 15.) *She shall be brought to the king*, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man, (Gen. ii. 22.) which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ, but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it; none besides are so brought *to the king*, (v. 14.) as to *enter into the king's palace*, v. 15. This intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ. (1.) In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2 Cor. xi. 2. Rom. vii. 4. (2.) In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints, at the end of time; then the *bride, the Lamb's wife*, shall be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come, (Rev. xix. 7.—xxi. 2.) and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, Matth. xxv. 1. Then they shall enter into the king's palaces, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord. In both these espousals, observe, to the honour of the royal bride, [1.] Her wedding-clothes; *raiment of needle-work*, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom. [2.] Her bride-maids; *the virgins her companions*, the wise virgins who have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, these who, being joined to the church, cleave to it and follow it, these shall go into the marriage. [3.] The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated; *With gladness and rejoicings shall she be brought*; when the prodigal is brought home to his father, *it is meet that we should make merry and be glad*; (Luke xv. 32.) and when the marriage of the Lamb is come, *let us be glad and rejoice*; (Rev. xix. 7.) for the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. iii. 11.

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious; (v. 16.) *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children*. Instead of the Old Testament church, the economy of which was waxen old, and ready to *vanish away*, (Heb. viii. 13.) as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its *root and fatness*; (Rom. xi. 17.) more and more eminent shall be the *children of the desolate*, than the *children of the married wife*, Isa. liv. 1. This promise to Christ is of the same import with that, (Isa. liii. 10.) *He shall see his seed*; and these shall be made *princes in all the earth*, there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, *made to our God kings and priests*, Rev. i. 6. Or it may intimate that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings; those in Canaan only, these in all the earth; nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the church, which shall *suck the breast of kings*. They are princes of Christ's making; for *by him kings reign, and princes decree justice*.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual, in the praises of the royal Bridegroom; (v. 18.) *I will make thy name to be remembered*. His Father has given him a *name above every name*, and here promises to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and Christians in every age, that shall bear up his name; which shall thus *endure for ever*, (1xxii. 17.) by being remembered in all the generations of time; for the entail of Christianity shall not be cut off. "Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." They that help to support the honour of Christ on earth, shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever

praising him. We are believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only Way thither, in our generation; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his name may *endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven*.

PSALM XLVI.

This psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, and his power, and providence, and gracious presence, with his church, in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do: probably, it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbouring nations, (2 Sam. viii.) and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught, I. To take comfort in God, when things look very black and threatening, v. 1..5. II. To mention, to his praise, the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, v. 6..9. III. To assure ourselves that God, who has glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, v. 10, 11. We may, in singing it, apply it, either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope, that, through Christ, we shall be more than conquerors over them, or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world, and their threatening insults, endeavouring to preserve a holy security and serenity of mind, when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther, that, when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come, let us sing the 46th psalm.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah. A song upon Alamoth.

1. **G**OD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. *Though* the waters thereof roar and be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4. *There is a river*, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High. 5. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that right early*.

The psalmist here teaches us, by his own example,

I. To triumph in God, and his relation to us, and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing in our behalf; (v. 1.) *God is our Refuge and Strength*; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our Refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe, and think ourselves so; secure upon good ground, Prov. xviii. 10. Are we oppressed by troubles? have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? God is our Strength, to bear us up under our burthens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; who will by his grace put strength into us, and on whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a Help, to do all that for us which we need, a present Help, a Help found, so the word is, one whom we have found to be so, a Help on which we may write *Probatum est*, as Christ is called a *tried stone*, Isa. xxviii. 16. Or, a *Help at hand*, one that we shall never have to seek for, but that is always near. Or, a *Help sufficient*, a Help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present Help; we cannot desire a better Help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

II. Totriumph over the greatest dangers; *God is our Strength and our Help*, a God all-sufficient to us; *therefore will not we fear*. Those that with a holy reverence fear God, need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth. *If God be for us, who can be against us*, to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God, and his providence and promise; "*We will not fear, though the earth be removed*, though all our creature-confidences fail us, and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah," for whose sons this psalm was penned, and, some think, by them, yet, while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear;

—Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruine.—HOR.

—Let Jove's dread arm with thunder rend the spheres,
Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears.

Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and finest parts of the earth, to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to *shake the mountains*, v. 3. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point; yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See xciii. 4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear who have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who can expect to be then most happy, when *the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up*. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to the *Rock that is higher than they*, and find firm footing upon that Rock.

2. How well-grounded the defence of this danger is, considering how well-guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, the *holy place of the tabernacle of the most High*; it is the ark of God, for which our hearts tremble. But when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

(1.) Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times; (v. 4.) *There is a river*, the streams whereof shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar, and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which *went softly by Jerusalem*; (Isa. viii. 6, 7.) though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem, in Hezekiah's time, Isa. xxxii. 10, 11. But this must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams, or, the Spirit of grace is the river, (John vii. 38, 39.) the comforts of which are the streams, that make glad the city of our God. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a Place of *broad rivers and streams*, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of

Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts, which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

(2.) Establishment to the church; though heaven and earth are shaken, yet *God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved*, v. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with her, and concern for her; his honour is embarked in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her, and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, that is, [1.] Not destroyed, nor removed, as the earth may be, v. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when it is in ruins. It is *built upon a rock*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. [2.] Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

(3.) Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great; *God shall help her*; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted, the more she shall multiply. God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early; *when the morning appears*, very speedily, for he is a *present Help*, (v. 1.) and very seasonably, then when things are brought to the last extremity, and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers to themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder: he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God, both as King of nations, and as King of saints.

I. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and over-ruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he does according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, *What doest thou?*

1. He checks the rage, and breaks the power, of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world; (v. 6.) *The heathen raged* at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David; compare ii. 1, 2. *The kingdoms were moved* with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous, furious manner, to oppose it; but God *uttered his voice, shake to them in his wrath*, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broken; the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing, their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. Such a melting of the spirits of the enemies, is described, Judg. v. 4, 5. and see Luke xxi. 25, 26.

2. When he pleases to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havoc among the nations, and lay all waste; (v. 8.) *Come, behold the works of the Lord*, they are to be observed, (lxvi. 5.) and to be sought out, cxi. 2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly, take notice of the *desolations he has made in the earth*, among the enemies of his church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies' country; and Oh what desolations did it make there! Cities were burnt, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, *How terrible art thou in thy works?* lxvi. 3. Let all that oppose him, see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him, and trust in him, see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but *they shall be broken to pieces*.

3. When he pleases to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace, v. 9. War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, cvii. 25, 29. *He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth*; sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breath. Both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder, and turned into a pruning-hook, the sword beaten into a plough-share, and the chariots of war burned, there being no more occasion for them; or rather it may be meant of what he does, at other times, in favour of his own people. He makes those wars to cease, that were waged against them, and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies' bow that was drawn against them; *No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper*, Isa. liv. 17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war; (Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.) which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue, is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

II. As King of saints, and as such we must own that *great and marvellous are his works*, Rev. xv. 3.

He does, and will do, great things.

1. For his own glory; (v. 10.) *Be still, and know that I am God*. (1.) Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it, to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain, *he that sits in heaven laughs at them*; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen, and not only among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth, and not only in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way, and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way, will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and *wherein they deal proudly, he*

will be above them, and make them know that he is so. (2.) Let his own people be still; let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know, to their comfort, that the Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels, and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, *Father, glorify thy name*, we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer, when Christ himself prayed it; *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*. Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former, *I will be exalted*; they triumph in this, (v. 7.) and again v. 11. It is the burthen of the song, "*The Lord of hosts is with us*; he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us and President over us; *The God of Jacob is a Refuge*, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide, and be sure of safety." Let all believers triumph in this. (1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power; *The Lord of hosts is with us*. God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures, which are called the *hosts of heaven and earth*, at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleases of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them, if the Lord of hosts be with us. (2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant, who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our Refuge, by whom we are sheltered, and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare, when without are fightings, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be, with us; has been, is, and will be, our Refuge: the original includes all; and well may *Selah* be added to it; Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

PSALM XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do it; and, I. We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently, v. 1, 6, 7. II. We are furnished with matter for praise, 1. God's majesty, v. 2. 2. His sovereign and universal dominion, v. 2, 7, 9. 3. The great things he had done, and will do, for his people, v. 3, 5. Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount Zion, which v. 5. seems to refer to; *God is gone up with a shout*, but it looks further, to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm, we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **O** CLAP your hands, all ye people shout unto God with the voice of triumph: 2. For the LORD most high is terrible; *he is a great King over all the earth*. 3. He shall subdue the people under us,

and the nations under our feet. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to, and barrenness in, this work. Observe, in these verses,

I. Who are called upon to praise God; "*all ye people*, all ye people of Israel;" those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, "*all ye people and nations of the earth*;" and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church; see Rom. xv. 11.

II. What they are called upon to do; "*O clap your hands*, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you; of your approbation, may your admiration, of what God has done in general; and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, Job xxvii. 23. *Clap your hands*, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; shout unto God, not to make him hear, (his ear is not heavy,) but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph." Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to some may seem indecent and imprudent, ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

III. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise.

1. That the God with whom we have to do, is a God of awful majesty; (v. 2.) *The Lord most High is terrible*. He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion; he is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power; a King over all the earth; all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is a great King; the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people, and their concerns, has done so, and ever will.

(1.) In giving them victory and success, (v. 3.) subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way, (xlv. 2.) and those that made attempts upon them. This, God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered, which way soever he turned his victorious arms; but this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall bring *them in as sheep into the fold*, so the word signifies, not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a *willing people in the day of his power*; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce them, which had gone astray, under

the guidance of the *great Shepherd and Bishop of souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25.

(2.) In giving them rest and settlement; (v. 4.) *He shall choose our inheritance for us*. He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel, it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them; see Deut. xxxii. 8. This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it, made it *the excellency*, the honour of Jacob; (Amos vi. 8.) and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob, because he loved him, Deut. vii. 8. Apply this spiritually, and it bespeaks, [1.] The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: *he has chosen it*, who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; and he has chosen so well, that he himself has undertaken to be the *Inheritance of his people*, (xvi. 5.) and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. i. 4. This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, for whom, because he loved them, he prepared such a happiness as eye has not seen. [2.] The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, "God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his."

5. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. 8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9. The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God: he is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty, that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here, (v. 6.) *Sing praises to God*, and again, *Sing praises, Sing praises to our King*, and again, *Sing praises*. This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition, if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? (Dan. v. 4.) Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined; (v. 7.) *Sing ye praises with understanding*, with *Maschil*. 1. "Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service." This is the gospel rule, (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) *To sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also*; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, Eph. v. 19. It is not an acceptable service, if it be not a reasonable service. (2.) "Instructively; as those

that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him."

Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense;

I. We must praise God going up; (*v. 5.*) *God is gone up with a shout*; which may refer, 1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself doing before it; the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him, he might be said to *go up*. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in, and give thanks for. 2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, Acts i. 9. Then *God went up with a shout*, the shout of a King, of a Conqueror, as one who, having *spoiled principalities and powers*, then *led captivity captive*, lxxviii. 18. He went up as Mediator, typified by the ark, and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, *into heaven itself*; see Heb. ix. 24. We read not of a shout, or the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God, that then shouted for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went; (Acts i. 11.) and we are sure that he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

II. We must praise God reigning, *v. 7, 8.* God is not only *our* King, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is *King of all the earth*, (*v. 7.*) over all the kings of the earth, and therefore, in every place, the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood, 1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator, and the God of nature, *reigns over the heathens*, disposes of them, and all their affairs, as he pleases, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him. *He sits upon the throne of his holiness*, which he has prepared in the heavens, and there he rules over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen, that serve other gods, are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness, on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity. 2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose *throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen*; not only he is intrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, Eph. ii. 12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery, that the *Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 6. Christ *sits upon the throne of his holiness*, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to show forth God's holiness, and to advance holiness among the children of men.

III. We must praise God as *attended and honoured by the princes of the people*, *v. 9.* This may be understood, 1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, at the solemn feasts, or to dispatch the public business of the nation. It was the honour of Israel, that they were the *people of the God of Abraham*, as they were Abraham's seed, and taken into his covenant; and, thanks be to God,

this blessing of Abraham is come upon the isles of the Gentiles, Gal. iii. 14. It was their happiness, that they had a settled government, *princes of their people*, who were the *shields of their land*; magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield; especially when their princes, *their shields, belong unto the Lord*, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service; for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God, that, in another sense, the *shields of the earth do belong to him*; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings, as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace, is a very happy omen, which promises abundance of blessings. 2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy, that, in the days of the Messiah, the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem; that they should all become *the people of the God of Abraham*, to whom it was promised that he should be the *father of many nations*. The *volunteers* of the people, so it may be read; it is the same word that is used, (cx. 3.) *Thy people shall be willing*; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing, to be his. When the *shields of the earth*, the ensigns of royal dignity, (1 Kings xiv. 27, 28.) are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

PSALM XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song; some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory, 2 Chron. xx. Others, of Sennacherib's defeat, when his army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for aught I know, it might be penned by David, upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that, but that it might serve any other the like occasion in aftertimes, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel-church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, (Heb. xii. 22.) *The Jerusalem which is above*, Gal. iv. 26. Jerusalem is here praised, 1. For its relation to God, *v. 1, 2, 11.* For God's care of it, *v. 3.* III. For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, *v. 4, 7.* IV. For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, 1. Of what God has done, does, and will do, for it, *v. 8.* 2. Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself, in and for that holy city, *v. 9, 10.* 3. Of the effectual provision which is made for its safety, *v. 11, 13.* 4. Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, *v. 14.* In singing this psalm, we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel-church, and must express and excite our sincere good-will to all its interests.

A song and psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **G**REAT is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5. They saw it, and so they mar-

velled; they were troubled, *and* hasted away. 6. Fear took hold upon them there, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail. 7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem, and to set forth the grandeur of that city; but he begins with the praises of God, and his greatness, (v. 1.) and ends with the praises of God, and his goodness, v. 14. For, whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them. And, particularly, whatever is said to the honour of the church, must redound to the honour of the church's God.

What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem, is, I. That the King of heaven owns it; it is *the city of our God*, (v. 1.) which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there; of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of any place upon earth, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*, cxxxii. 13, 14. It is *the city of the great King*, (v. 2.) the King of all the earth, who is pleased to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes, to prove, that to swear by Jerusalem, is profanely to swear by God himself, (Matth. v. 35.) for it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory.

1. It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. In Judah God is known, and his name is great, but especially in Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem *God is great*, (v. 1.) who in other places was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart, in which God is great, in which he is uppermost, in which he is all. There *God is known*; (v. 3.) and where he is known, he will be great; none condemn God but those that are ignorant of him.

2. It is devoted to the honour of God. It is therefore called *the mountain of his holiness*, for *holiness to the Lord* is written upon it, and all the furniture of it, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called *the holy city*, bad as it was, (Matth. xxvii. 53.) till that was set up, but never after.

3. It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God; there he is greatly praised, and *greatly to be praised*, v. 1. Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness, the more it is expected that we should abound in his praises. They that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem, had reason to be thankful that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified the gospel-church; for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth, arises from that church upon earth, which is therefore his tabernacle among men.

4. It is taken under his special protection; (v. 3.) He is *known for a Refuge*; he has approved himself such a one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. They that know him, will *trust in him*, and *seek to him*, ix. 10. God was known, not only in the streets, but even in the palaces, of Jerusalem, for a Refuge; the great men had recourse to God, and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city, when it reigned in the palaces.

5. Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially mount Zion, in which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired; *Beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth*, v. 2.

The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when Infinite Wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful, was, that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity; and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus beautified with holiness, be called *the joy of the whole earth*, that is, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Zion was on the north side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or, if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zion-ward for it.

II. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a Refuge, they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies; For *the kings were assembled*, v. 4. The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem, their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces, they passed, advanced, and marched on, together, not doubting but they should soon make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy, of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation, and gave check to their fury; as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel, Numb. xxiv. 2. *They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away*, v. 5. *Net Veni, vidi, vici—I came, I saw, I conquered*; but, on the contrary, *Veni, vidi, victus sum—I came, I saw, I was defeated*. Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable; but the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city, and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors on their minds thereby, as made them retire with precipitation. Though they were kings, though they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for Omnipotence, and therefore *fear came upon them, and pain*, v. 6. Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put them in pain that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem is here compared to the throes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly, (1 Thess. v. 3.) which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed; (v. 7.) *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east-wind*; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east-wind; (Job xxvii. 20, 21.) these shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures. *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

8. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever Selah. 9. We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. 10. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments

12. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. 14. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

I. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find, that as *we have heard*, so *have we seen*, (v. 8.) and what we have seen, obliges us to believe what we have heard.

1. "As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days." Note, God's latter appearances for his people, against his and their enemies, are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. 2. "As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care; and now we have seen it, we have seen the power of our God, we have seen his goodness, we have seen his care and concern for us; that he is a *Wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her*." Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing, for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself, and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

II. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. "From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, in the city of our God, we may conclude, that God will establish it for ever." This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, (that city was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust,) but has its accomplishment in the gospel-church; we are sure that that shall be established for ever, it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matth. xvi. 18. God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion, Isa. xiv. 32. And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God, upon which the church is built.

III. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. "From what we have heard, and seen, and hoped for, we may take occasion to think much of God's loving-kindness, whenever we meet in the midst of his temple," v. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us, must be run up to the fountain of God's loving-kindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This, therefore, we must think of with delight, think of frequently, and fixedly. What subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable! We must have God's loving-kindness always before our eyes, (xxvi. 3.) especially when we attend upon him in his temple. When we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, we meet in his temple, and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion thence to think of his loving-kindness.

IV. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them

to his honour; (v. 10.) "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise, not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth." By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem, God had made himself a name; he had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it; and so *was his praise*; that is, some, in all parts, would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes, his praise will go, at least, it should go, and, at length, it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, xxii. 27. Rev. xi. 15. Some, by his name, understand especially that glorious name of his, the *Lord of hosts*; according to that name, so is his praise; for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must, in a special manner, acknowledge his justice in all he does for them; "Righteousness fills thy right hand; all the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity."

V. Let all the members of the church in particular, take to themselves the comfort of what God does for his church in general; (v. 11.) "Let mount Zion rejoice, the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country-towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad; let the women, in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness this great salvation which God has wrought for us." Note, When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure, of the extraordinary deliverances of the church, and be glad because of God's judgments, the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom, (therefore called *judgments*;) and working for the good of his church.

VI. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us; (v. 12, 13.) *Walk about Zion*. Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph; let those who are employed in that solemnity, walk round the walls, as they did, (Neh. xii. 31.) singing, and praising God. In doing this, let them tell the towers, and mark well the bulwarks, 1. That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe, with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are in all their full strength, and none of them damaged; the palaces in their beauty, and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it; (v. 4.) *Tell this to the generation following*, as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. 2. That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger, another time. And so, (1.) We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the strong-hold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion, with pleasure, equal to the terror with which the kings, their enemies, saw them, v. 5. Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, Lam. iv. 12. *All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem*: nor could they have entered, if the inhabitants had not sinned away their defence. *Set your heart to her bulwarks*. This intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were, not the objects of sense, which they might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon; it was well enough fortified, indeed, both by nature and art; but its bulwarks, that were mostly to be relied upon, were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made

concerning it. "Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that, if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable." Calvin observes here, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated, that, in process of time, they would all be destroyed, and remain no longer to be seen; for, otherwise, what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their Master told them, that in a little time one stone of it should not be *left upon another*, Matth. xxiv. 1, 2. Therefore, (2.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel-church, that mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. "Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces, of that, for you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it, and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the Rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it."

VII. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving-kindness, v. 14. Tell this to the generation following, transmit this truth as a sacred deposit to your posterity, That this God, who has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us. 1. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that *God himself will be with them, and will be their God*, Rev. xxi. 3. 2. If he be our God, he will be our Guide, our faithful constant Guide, to show us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us, even to the last. He will be our Guide *above* death; so some. He will so guide us, as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our Guide *beyond* death; so others. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up again to glory.

PSALM XLIX.

This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms, we have the penman praying or praising; in these, we have him preaching; and it is our duty, in singing psalms, to teach and admonish ourselves and one another. The scope and design of this discourse is, to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; as also to comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that arises from the prosperity of the wicked. I. In the preface, he proposes to awaken worldly people out of their security, (v. 1, 3.) and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, v. 4, 5. II. In the rest of the psalm, 1. He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doating upon the wealth of this world, by showing them, (1.) That they cannot, with all their wealth, save their friends from death, v. 6, 9. (2.) They cannot save themselves from death, v. 10. (3.) They cannot secure themselves a happiness in this world, v. 11, 12. Much less, (4.) Can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, v. 14. 2. He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, (1.) Against the fear of death, v. 15. (2.) Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, v. 16, 20. In singing this psalm, let us receive these instructions and be wise.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**EAR this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2. Both low and high, rich and poor together. 3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is; for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

I. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say; (v. 1, 2.) *Hear this, all ye people*; hear it and heed it, hear it and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice; *Hear and give ear*, lxii. 9, 11. Not only, "Hear, all ye Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan," but, *Hear, all ye people, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world*; for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesses to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together, to hear the word of God; let both, therefore, hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world, hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low, hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger from an inordinate desire toward the wealth of the world, as rich people from an inordinate delight in it.

He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded; (v. 3.) *My mouth shall speak of wisdom*; what he had to say, 1. Was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding, it will make these wise and intelligent that receive it, and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation, but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. 2. It was what he had himself well-digested. What his mouth spake was the *meditation of his heart*; (as xix. 14.—xlvi. 1.) it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

II. He engages his own attention; (v. 4.) *I will incline mine ear to a parable*. It is called a *parable*, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse, and very instructive. It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, 1. That he was taught it by the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others, must first learn themselves. 2. That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. 3. That he would not expect others should attend to

that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God *gives the tongue of the learned*, he first *wakens the ear to hear as the learned*, Isa. 1. 4.

III. He promises to make the matter as plain, and as affecting, as he could; *I will open my dark saying upon the harp*. What he learned for himself, he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate, for the benefit of others. 1. Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them; tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, *Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables?* For the sake of such, he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain, that he that runs might read it. 2. Others understood it well enough, but they were not removed by it, it never affected them, and, for their sake, he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. *A verse may find him who a sermon flies*. Herbert.

IV. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things; we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, (v. 6.) he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth; *Wherefore should I fear?* he means, *Wherefore should I fear their fear*, (Isa. viii. 12.) the fears of worldly people? 1. "Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, *when the iniquity of my heels*, or of my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels, *shall compass me about*, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, which will not enable them to redeem their friends? I will not fear their power, for it cannot enable them to ruin me." The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable, when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand them in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. 2. "Wherefore should I be afraid like them?" The days of old age and death are the *days of evil*, Eccl. xii. 1. In the day of judgment, *the iniquity of our heels*, or of our steps, our past sins, will compass us about, will be set in order before us. *Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself*. In these days, worldly wicked people will be afraid; nothing more dreadful to them, that have set their hearts upon the world, than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because, after death, comes the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? xxiii. 4. When his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and then, even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Note, The children of God, though ever so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well-guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ran-

som for him; 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever;) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. 12. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. 13. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

In these verses, we have,

I. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, xvii. 14.—xlix. 6, 11. It is taken for granted that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, (v. 6.) houses and lands of inheritance, which they call their own, v. 11. God often gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men, who live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him—by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends; and that they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have so much of them, who, being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, Prov. i. 32. A man may have abundance of the wealth of this world, and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love, and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described;

1. They repose a confidence in their riches; *They trust in their wealth*, (v. 6.) they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and that they need nothing else, no, not God himself. Their gold is their hope, (Job xxxi. 24.) and so it becomes their god. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people; (Mark x. 24.) *How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* See 1 Tim. vi. 17.

2. They take a pride in their riches; *They boast themselves in the multitude of them*, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. *My might, and the power of my hand, have gotten me this wealth*; as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent, than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, (x. 3.) and can set all the world at defiance; *I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever*; therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and, if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but they often change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions; (v. 11.) *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall con-*

tinue for ever, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes: but it intimates, (1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world, but they are his outward thoughts; his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things; but a worldly man has only some foreign floating thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (2.) There it is industriously concealed; they cannot, for shame, say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but, inwardly, they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that *they* shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think *their houses* shall, and their dwelling-places—suppose they should, what good will that do them, when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not; for the world passes away, and the fashion of it: all things are devoured by the teeth of time.

II. A demonstration of their folly herein. In general, (v. 13.) *This their way is their folly*. Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way: they that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a *fool* who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, Luke xii. 19, 20. And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood; men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shows,

1. That, with all their wealth, they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death; (v. 7-9.) *None of them can by any means redeem his brother; his brother-worldling, who would give him counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God does not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both, if he pleases, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever, in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true, that the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever; life, when it is going, cannot be arrested, and when it is gone, it cannot be recalled, by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further, to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Immortality is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The learned*

Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ; "*The redemption of the soul shall be precious*, shall be high-prized, it shall cost very dear; but, being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, it shall never need to be repeated, Heb. ix. 25, 26.—x. 12. And he, the Redeemer, *shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption*; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore," Rev. i. 18. Christ did that for us, which all the riches of the world could not do; well therefore may he be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend, could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that *love father or brother more than him, are not worthy of him*. This likewise shows the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That, with all their wealth, they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees, and it vexes him to see it, that *wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*, v. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will, at length, come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever, and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that, though he shall not, his *house* shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians, but they cannot out-wit death, nor evade his stroke, with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish, (*Fortuna favet fatuis—Fools are fortune's favourites*;) these, though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt, in the world: but that shall not excuse them, they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and the foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked; the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but, however, they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn; (Jer. xli. 8.) *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*. (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool, (Eccl. ii. 19.) perhaps to an enemy.

And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour; (v. 12.) *Man, being in honour, abides not*. We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him; man in splendour, man at his best estate, surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire; yet then he abides not, his honour does not continue, that is a fleeting shadow, he himself does not. He carries not all night; this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarcely be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a bating-time; *He is like the beasts that perish*; he must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is; his dead body likewise will putrify as theirs do; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) frequently the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity; (as the beasts, when they die, leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in,) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

3. That their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon, will not only not save them from death, but will sink

them so much the lower into hell; (v. 14.) *Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, (Hos. iv. 16.) and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave, like fat sheep in a fold, *to be brought forth to the day of wrath,* Job xxi. 30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death, *the worm that dies not,* Job xxiv. 40. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with, *Son, remember,* Luke xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which *hell from beneath is moved,* Isa. xiv. 9, &c. While a saint can ask proud Death, *Where is thy sting?* Death will ask the proud sinner, *Where is thy wealth, thy pomp?* and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, (Dan. xii. 2.) *the upright shall have dominion over them;* shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt, elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell; but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wise, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, *Give us of your oil.* Let this comfort us, in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming, when the tables will be turned, (Esther ix. 1.) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things, as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwelling; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others caressed and admired them, was all adventitious and borrowed, it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell, being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah. 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: 17. For, when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him; 18. Though, while he lived, he blessed his soul: (and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself:) 19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. 20. Man *that* is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

Good reason is here given to good people,

1. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, v. 15. He had shewed

(v. 14.) how miserable the dead are that die in their sins; here he shows how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave: but the distinction of men's spiritual state, though, in this life, it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet, at and after death, it makes a very great one; *Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul. Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

1. That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave; which includes, (1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence, (Gen. iii. 19.) and it is cruel enough in executing that power, (Cant. viii. 6.) but it has no such power over the soul; it has power to silence, and imprison, and consume, the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses, more freely than ever; (Rev. vi. 9, 10.) it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark-lantern, yet it does not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. (2.) The re-uniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall, at length, be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life, that was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last. (3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin; "God shall redeem my soul from the *sheol* of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast," v. 14. It is a great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt of the second death, (Rev. ii. 11.) and therefore the first death has no sting, and the grave no victory.

2. That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them, (xxxii. 5.) *Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it.* He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them, (John xiv. 2, 3.) those everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9.

II. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which, as it is their pride and joy, has often been the envy, and grief, and terror, of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposes they will be under a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with a high hand, that with their wealth and interest they will run down religion and religious people, and that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposes, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them, and have every thing at command: *Pecuniæ obediunt omnes et omnia—Every person and every thing obeys the commanding influence of money.* (2.) That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly, which naturally makes men haughty, insolent, and imperious, v. 16. Thus they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and therefore formidable. (3.) That they are very easy and secure in themselves and in their own minds; (v. 18.) *In his life-time, he blessed his soul;* he thought himself a very happy man, such an one as he would be, and a very good man, such an one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, "*Soul, take thine ease,* and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with

the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is well, and will be well for ever." Note, [1.] It is of great consequence to consider what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers *bless themselves in the God of truth*, (Isa. lxxv. 16.) and think themselves happy if he be theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that. [2.] There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them; they applaud that in themselves which God condemns, and speak peace to themselves, when God denounces war against them. Yet this is not all. (4.) They are in good reputation among their neighbours; "*Men will praise thee*, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family." This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though, at the same time, nothing is done for the soul, nothing for eternity; and accordingly they *bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors*, x. 3. If men were to be our judges, it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion: but what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not of the wicked man spoken of; "*He, in his life-time, blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thyself*." The worldling magnified himself; but thou that dost not, like him, speak well of thyself, but dost well for thyself, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thine everlasting honour.

2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prosperous sinners; (lxxiii. 17.) "Think what they will be, in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are, and have, in this world."

(1.) In the other world, they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of; it is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must; (v. 17.) *When he dies*, it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but *he shall carry nothing away with him* of all that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it. But those have something to show in the other world, for their living in this world, who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt, and sinful, and spiritually naked, into it, they go renewed, and sanctified, and well-clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out of it. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, have something which, when they die, they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of; but as for worldly possessions, as we *brought nothing into the world*, (what we have we had from others,) so it is certain that we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others. 1 Tim. vi. 7. They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after them, to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave, to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell; grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

(2.) In the other world, they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world, (v. 19.) *The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers*, his worldly-

wicked fathers, whose sayings he approved, and whose steps he trod in, his fathers who would not hearken to the word of God, Zech. i. 4. He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for the end of the man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied. A fool, a wicked man, in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he is *like the beasts that perish*; (v. 20.) nay, it is better to be a beast, than to be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour, that understand, that know and do their duty, and make conscience of it, are as gods, and children of the Most High. But men in honour, that understand not, that are proud, and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish, like the beasts, ingloriously as to this world, though not, like the beasts, indemnified as to another world. Let prosperous sinners therefore be afraid for themselves, but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

PSALM L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of prayer or praise; it is a psalm of reproof and admonition, in singing which, we are to teach and admonish one another. In the foregoing psalm, after a general demand of attention, God by his prophet deals (v. 3.) with the children of this world, to convince them of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the wealth of this world; in this psalm, after a like preface, he deals with those that were, in profession, the church's children, to convince them of their sin and folly in placing their religion in ritual services, while they neglected practical godliness; and this is as sure a way to ruin as the other. This psalm is intended, 1. As a reproof to the carnal Jews, both those that rested in the external performances of their religion, and were remiss in the more excellent duties of prayer and praise; and those that expounded the law to others, but lived wicked lives themselves. 2. As a prediction of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, and of the introducing of a spiritual way of worship, in and by the kingdom of the Messiah, John iv. 23, 24. 3. As a representation of the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning their observance of those things which they have thus been taught; men shall be judged *according to what is written in the books*; and therefore Christ is fitly represented speaking as a Judge, then when he speaks as a Lawgiver. Here is, I. The glorious appearance of the Prince that gives law and judgment, v. 1. . 6. II. Instruction given to his worshippers, to turn their sacrifices into prayers, v. 7. 15. III. A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live in disobedience to his commands; (v. 16. 20.) their doom read; (v. 21, 22.) and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions, v. 23. These instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves and give to one another, singing this psalm.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **T**HE mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, (that he may judge his people.) 5. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself Selah.

It is probable that Asaph was not only the chief musician, who was to put a tune to this psalm, but that he was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

Here is,

I. The court called, in the name of the King of kings; (v. 1.) *The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken*; El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the Judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend, not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel, for their hypocrisy and ingratitude, might safely be referred to any man of reason; nay, let the house of Israel itself *judge between God and his vineyard*; (Isa. v. 3.) but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God, in spirit and in truth; because, when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it; (see Mal. i. 11. Acts x. 34.) and because, in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together, to receive their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself unto God.

II. The judgment set, and the Judge taking his seat. As, when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness, it is said, *He came from Sinai, and rose up from Spir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law*; (Deut. xxxiii. 2.) so, with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here, 1. *That he shall shine out of Zion*, as then from the top of Sinai, v. 2. Because in Zion his oracle was now fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the oracles issued for the execution of them; (Joel i. 1.) *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion*. Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences, and the reforming and refining of his church; and then God, who always dwells in Zion, may be said to *shine out of Zion*. Moreover, he may be said to *shine out of Zion*, because the gospel, which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, (Isa. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2.) and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, (Luke xxiv. 47.) and Christians are said to come unto mount Zion, to receive their instructions, Heb. xii. 22, 28. Zion is here called *the perfection of beauty*, because it was the holy hill; and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. 2. *That he shall come, and not keep silence*, shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men, as he had done, (v. 21.) but shall show his displeasure at them, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, (Eph. iii. 5, 6.) and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day, *our God shall come, and shall not keep silence*, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. 3. That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible; *a fire shall devour before him*. The fire of his judgments shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion, being afraid of that devouring fire, (Isa. xxxiii. 14.) might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel-kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, Luke

xii. 49. The Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, Acts ii. 2, 3. And, in the last judgment, Christ shall come in flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 8. See Dan. vii. 9. Heb. x. 27. 4. That as on mount Sinai he came with *ten thousands of his saints*, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, (v. 4.) as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, (Deut. iv. 26.—xxxii. 28.—xxxiii. 1.) and God by his prophets, Isa. i. 2. Mic. vi. 2. The equity of the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

III. The parties summoned; (v. 5.) *Gather my saints unto me*. This may be understood, either, 1. Of saints indeed; "Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves;" for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those who, in sacrificing, *make a covenant with him*, and so attend to, and answer, the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and his setting up of Christ's kingdom, was, to gather together in one the children of God, John xi. 52. And, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, all his saints shall be gathered together unto him, (2 Thess. ii. 1.) to be assessors with him in the judgment, *for the saints shall judge the world*, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, (1.) Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints, who have, in sincerity, covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. (2.) It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great Sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had,) that we poor sinners can covenant with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant, before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, 2. It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called *a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*, Exod. xix. 6. They were, as a body politic, taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity, and it was done with great solemnity *by sacrifice*, Exod. xxiv. 8. "Let them come and hear what God has to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will, in due time, send them by his Son; which shall supersede the ceremonial law. If these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by."

IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; (v. 6.) *The heavens shall declare his righteousness*; those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial; (v. 4.) *the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah. True and righteous are his judgments*, Rev. xix. 1, 2. The righteousness of God, in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel, (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed,) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare, 1. It will be universally known, and proclaimed to all the world. *As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom, and power, of God the Creator*, (xix. 1.) so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice, and righteousness, of God the Judge; and so loud do they proclaim both, that there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard, as it follows

there, v. 3. 2. It will be incontestably owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners' own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given, is, *for God is Judge himself*, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, they may do unjustly: but when he is Judge himself, there can be no injustice done. *Is God unrighteous, who takes vengeance?* The apostle, for this reason, stutters at the thought of it; *God forbid! for then how shall God judge the world?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. (2.) He will be justified; *God is Judge*, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he *will be clear when he judges*, li. 4.

7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, *even* thy God. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, *to have been* continually before me. 9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he-goats out of thy folds: 10. For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. 12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof. 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: 15. *And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

I. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed; (v. 7.) *Hear, O my people, and I will speak.* Note, It is justly expected, that whatever others do, when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will, if they do not? And then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us, when we are ready to hear what he says; even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences, we must be forward to hear what he says, to hear even *the rod, and him that has appointed it.*

II. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, v. 8, &c. Now,

1. This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews; but what was the ground of the controversy? Not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lusts, as the adulterous woman, Prov. vii. 14. Their constant sacrifices, they thought, would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had, in some degree, neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence, in compari-

son with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their Debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests without their contributions; but God here shows them the contrary, (1.) That he did not need their sacrifices; what occasion had He for their bullocks and goats, who has the command of all the *beasts of the forest*, and the *cattle upon a thousand hills*, (v. 9, 10.) has an incontestable propriety in them, and dominion over them, has them all always under his eye, and within his reach, and can make what use he pleases of them? they all wait on him, and are all at his disposal; civ. 27.-29. Can we add any thing to his store, whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself and the fulness thereof? v. 11, 12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. (2.) That he could not be benefitted by their sacrifices. Their goodness, of this kind, could not possibly extend unto him, nor, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better; (v. 13.) *Will I eat the flesh of bulls?* It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could, of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink, as our bodies are. It is said indeed of the demons whom the Gentiles worshipped, that they did *eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink-offerings*, (Deut. xxxii. 38.) they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? No, *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to love God and our neighbour, *better than all burnt-offerings*, so much better, that God, by his prophets, often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable, to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him, he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him; see Prov. xv. 8. Isa. i. 11, &c.—lxvi. 3. Jer. vi. 20. Amos v. 21. They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to conduct themselves, in all other instances, toward God as their God.

2. This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah, he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings; he will no more have those to be *continually before him*; (v. 8.) he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats, to be burnt upon his altar, v. 9. For indeed he never appointed this, as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it, to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should, in the fulness of time, offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, with which God, through Christ, will be well pleased.

III. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which, under the law, were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now, under the gospel, come in the room of those carnal ordinances which were imposed until the times of reformation. He shows us here, (v. 14, 15.) what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. 1. We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins: offer to God

confession; so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it; *A broken and contrite heart* is the sacrifice which *God will not despise*, li. 17. If the sin was not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted. 2. We must give God thanks for his mercies to us; *Offer to God thanksgiving*, every day, often every day, (*Seven times a day will I praise thee*,) and upon special occasions; and *this shall please the Lord*, if it come from an humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, *better than an ox or bullock, that has horns and hoofs*, lxix. 30, 31. 3. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him; *Pay thy vows to the Most High*, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purport. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel-ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. 4. In the day of distress, we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer; (*v. 15.*) *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, and not upon any other god. Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier, way of seeking his favour, than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. 5. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such a way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? 17. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. 18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. 23. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him, and keep-

ing up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion: hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe here,

1. The charge drawn up against them.

1. They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion; (*v. 16.*) *What hast thou to do, O wicked man, to declare my statutes?* This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to show what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives. Let them make out their claim to it if they can. Some think it points prophetically at the Scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it; but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, (Matth. xxiii.) and St. Paul, (Rom. ii. 21, 22.) makes this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction; and therefore what had they to do, to expound the law; who rejected the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly, to declare his statutes, and to take his covenant in their mouths. It is very possible, and too common, for those that declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths, in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of an usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming, when they will be thrust out as intruders, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?*

2. They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God; (*v. 17.*) *Thou hatest instruction*. They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do, for this fed their pride, and made them look great, and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them; "Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of Providence." No wonder that these who hate to be reformed hate the means of reformation; *Thou castest my words behind thee*. They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law; (Rom. ii. 19.) but in their conversations they cast God's Word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners; (*v. 18.*) "*When thou sawest a thief*, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to be a partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and *thou hast been partaker with adulterers*, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast had pleasure in them that do them," Rom. i. 32. (3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue-sins; (*v. 19.*) "*Thou givest thy mouth to evil*; not only allowest

thyself in, but addicest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil speaking." [1.] Lying; *Thy tongue frames deceit*, which denotes contrivance and deliberation in lying. It knits or links deceit; so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. [2.] Slandering; (v. 20.) "*Thou sittest, and speakest against thy brother*, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him, magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master, to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is *thine own mother's son*. He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him; yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; *thou sittest*, and doest this, as a judge upon the bench, with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to." Those that do ill themselves, commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

II. The proof of this charge; (v. 21.) "*These things thou hast done*; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; these things, God knows, and thine own heart knows, thou hast done." The sins of sinners will be proved upon them, beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the great day; "*I will reprove thee*, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself." The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with, when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror; he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, against the first table, against the second table, sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order, against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

III. The Judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience; "*I kept silence*, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thine evil works was respited, and not executed speedily." Note, The patience of God is very great toward provoking sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them; it would be neither difficulty nor damage to him, to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself, nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself." Sinners take God's silence for consent, and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved, the more are their hearts hardened; but, if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

IV. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites; (v. 22.) "*Now consider this, ye that forget God*; consider that God knows, and keeps accounts of, all your sins; that he will call you to an account for them; that patience, abused, will turn into the greater wrath; that though you forget God,

and your duty to him, he will not forget you, and your rebellions against him: consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will *tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver*." It is the doom of hypocrites to be *cut in sunder*, Matth. xxiv. 51. Note, 1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. 2. Those that forget God forget themselves; and it will never be right with them, till they consider, and so recover themselves. Consideration is the first step toward conversion. 3. Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath. 4. When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

V. Full instructions given to us all, how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; we have it, v. 23. which directs us what to do, that we may attain our chief end.

1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told, that whoso offers praise glorifies him, whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God, as every sacrifice was directed; put it into the hands of the Priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the Altar; see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. This he is pleased, in infinite condescension, to interpret as glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

2. Man's chief end, in conjunction with this, is, to enjoy God; and we are here told that those who order their conversation aright shall see his salvation. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better. (2.) Those that would have their conversation right must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it according to rule; to understand their way, and to direct it. (3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; them God will make to see his salvation; for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it and enjoy it, to see it, and to see themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way, to obtain the great salvation.

PSALM LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. It is pity indeed, that, in our devout addresses to God, we should have any thing else to do than to praise God, for that is the work of heaven; but we make other work for ourselves, by our own sins and follies: we must come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitents, to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God; and if therein we would take with us words, we can no where find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon his character: all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is said of him, (1 Kings xv. 5.) *That he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*. In this psalm, I. He confesses his sin, v. 3-6. II. He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, v. 1, 2, 7, 9. III. For peace of conscience, v. 8, 12. IV. For grace to go and sin no more, v. 10, 11, 14. V. For liberty of access to God, v. 15. VI. He promises to do what he could for the good

of the souls of others, (v. 13.) and for the glory of God, v. 16, 17, 19. And *lastly*, concludes with a prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, v. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin should, with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet, in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it to all ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections, we shall, through Christ, find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1. **H**AVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. 4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall. But, though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. 1. The sin which, in this psalm, he laments, was, the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of, or thought of, without detestation. His debauching of Bathsheba was the inlet to all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. 2. The repentance which, in this psalm, he expresses, he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for aught that appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will, by some means or other, recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind, again. Herein, generally, he uses the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to. But those that have been overtaken in any fault, ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wise reprover their best friend. *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil.* 3. David, being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? 4. He drew up, by divine inspiration, the workings of his heart toward God, upon this occasion, into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church. (1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of; his sin having been notorious, that the plaster might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but, having lost the honour

of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. (2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them, in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus *strengthens his brethren*; (Luke xxii. 32.) and, *for this cause he obtained mercy*, 1 Tim. i. 16.

In these words, we have,

1. David's humble petition, v. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable; *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Luke xviii.

13. David was, upon many accounts, a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much, in the cause of God; and yet, when he is convinced of sin, he does not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace; *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain that the best man in the world is undone, if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

1. What his plea is for this mercy; "*Have mercy upon me, O God,* not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king;" his plea is not, *Lord, remember David and all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark*; (cxxxii. 1, 2.) a true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but, "*Have mercy upon me for thy mercy's sake.* I have nothing to plead with thee, but," (1.) "*The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving-kindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable.*" (2.) "*The fulness of thy mercy.* There is in thee not only loving-kindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions."

2. What is the particular mercy that he begs; the pardon of sin; *Blot out my transgressions*, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it, or the creditor has remitted it; "*Wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face, to my confusion and terror.*" The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, reconciles us to ourselves, v. 2. "*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity*; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace; for it is only from a ceremonial pollution that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out. Oh wash me much, wash me thoroughly; *cleanse me from my sin.*" Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it unfits us for communion with God, in grace or glory. When God pardons sin, he cleanses us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die*; (2 Sam. xii. 13.) yet he prays, *Wash me, cleanse me; blot out my transgressions*; for God will be sought unto, even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God had forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importu-

nate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it, and knew how to value it.

II. David's penitential confessions, *v.* 3-5. 1. He was very free to own his guilt before God; *I acknowledge my transgressions*; this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, xxxii. 4, 5. Nathan said, *Thou art the man; I am*, says David; *I have sinned*. 2. He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it, with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief; *My sin is ever before me*, to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me; (so some;) "I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me." David was, upon all occasions, put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so, for his further abasement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep, without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent by him, and the fatal warrant he wrote, and signed, for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated. It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesses his actual transgressions; (*v.* 4.) *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*. David was a very great man, and yet, having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet, having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

[1.] His confession is particular; *"I have done this evil*, this that I am now reproved for, this that my own conscience now upbraids me with." Note, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

[2.] He aggravates the sin which he confesses, and lays a load upon himself for it; *Against thee, and in thy sight*. Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee*, Luke xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin. *First*, That it was committed against God. To him the affront is given, and he is the Party wronged. It is his truth that by wilful sin we deny; his conduct that we despise; his command that we disobey; his promise that we distrust; his name that we dishonour; and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and dishonourably. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin, (Gen. xxxix. 9.) and David here the great aggravation of it; *Against thee only*. Some make this to bespeak the prerogative of his crown, that, as a king, he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper, to suppose that it bespeaks the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba

and Uriah; against his own soul and body, and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God; and all this helped to humble him; but none of these were sinned against so as God was; and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful account upon; *Against thee only have I sinned*. *Secondly*, That it was committed in God's sight; "This not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceeding sinful." This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that they have been committed under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience, or a contempt of his justice.

[3.] He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him; for that *the sword shall never depart from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11. He is very forward to own his sin, and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God; *First*, That God might be justified in the threatenings he had spoken by Nathan; "Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse." Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings, (1 Sam. iii. 18.) *It is the Lord*. And Hezekiah, (2 Kings xx. 19.) *Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken*. *Secondly*, That God might be clear when he judged, when he executed those threatenings. David published his confession of sin, that, when hereafter he should come into trouble, none might say, God had done him any wrong; for he owns the Lord is righteous: thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves; *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us*.

(2.) He confesses his original corruption; (*v.* 5.) *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*. He does not call upon God to behold it, but unto himself. "Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart; and so the sin might have been prevented: let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin; *Lord, I did so; but indeed I could not help it, my inclination led me to it*;" (for as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it; so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in;) "but let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin; Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself." David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body, (cxxxix. 14, 15.) it was *curiously wrought*; and yet here he says it was shapen in iniquity, sin was twisted in with it; not as it came out of God's hands, but as it comes through our parents' loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her; (cxvi. 16.—lxxxvi. 16.) and yet he here says *she conceived him in sin*; for though she was, by grace, a child of God, she was, by nature, a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us, that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have, from our birth, the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call *original sin*, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, the proneness to evil, and backwardness to good, which is the burthen of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

III. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God; (v. 6.) both his good-will toward us, (*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts,*) "*Thou wouldest have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession;*" and his good work in us, "*In the hidden part thou hast made,*" or shalt make, "*me to know wisdom.*" Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far toward making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart (prudence and sincerity) bespeak the man of God perfect. 2. What God requires of us, he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how does this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justified and cleared; "*Lord, thou wast not the Author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which, if I had duly considered it, would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept mine integrity.*" (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated; "*Lord, thou desirest truth; but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? Thou hast made me to know wisdom; but I have not lived up to what I have known.*" (3.) He is hereby encouraged, in his repentance, to hope that God would graciously accept of him; for, [1.] God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again; *Thou desirest truth in the inward part*; this is that which God has an eye to, in a returning sinner, that *in his spirit there be no guile*, xxxii. 2. David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart toward God, in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. [2.] He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that, in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the *hidden man of the heart*, (1 Pet. iii. 4.) he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter, another time. Some read it as a prayer; "*Lord, in this instance, I have done foolishly; for the future, make me to know wisdom.*" Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: 13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

See here,

I. What David prays for; many excellent petitions he here puts up; to which, if we do but add, for Christ's sake, they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them; (v. 7.) "*Purge me with hyssop*; pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I have forfeited and lost." The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the

touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both, upon them, with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were, at length, discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution. "*Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges.*" But it is founded upon gospel-grace; *Purge me with hyssop*, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called *the blood of sprinkling*, (Heb. xii. 24.) that purges the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shut us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body, under the law, shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb. x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are, that are justified; (Isa. i. 18.) *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*

2. He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted, till first he is cleansed; but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, "*Make me to hear joy and gladness*; (v. 8.) let me have a well-grounded peace, of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings, may rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as an herb." Note, (1.) The pain of an heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who, as a Spirit of bondage, smites and wounds, and, as a Spirit of adoption, heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that arise from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner, are as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work, not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart; that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort; (v. 9.) "*Hide thy face from my sins*; be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back; blot out all mine iniquities out of the book of thine account; blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun," Isa. xlv. 22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for, as for pardon and peace, v. 10. He does not pray, "*Lord, preserve me my reputation,*" as Saul, *I have sinned, yet honour me before this people*. No, his great concern is, to get his corrupt nature changed: the sin he had been guilty of, was, (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God*. He now saw, more than ever, what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God, (whose prerogative it is to create,) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart, can now make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. He created the world by the word of his power, as the God of nature, and it is by the word

of his power as the God of grace that *we are clean*, (John xv. 3.) that *we are sanctified*, John xvii. 17. (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him; and therefore he prays, "*Lord, renew a right spirit within me*; repair the decays of spiritual strength, which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again." Renew a *constant* spirit within me; so some. He had, in this matter, discovered much inconstancy and inconsistency with himself, and therefore prays, "Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee."

5. He prays for the continuance of God's goodwill toward him, and the progress of his good work in him, v. 11. (1.) That he might never be shut out from God's favour; "*Cast me not away from thy presence*, as one whom thou abhorrest, and canst not endure to look upon." He prays, that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that, wherever he went, he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the guidance of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power, and that he might not be forbidden communion with God; "Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer." He does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him; "God's will be done;" but, "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well." (2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace; *Take not thy holy Spirit from me*. He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw; and that, because he also was flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more strive with him, or work upon him, Gen. vi. 3. This he dreads, more than any thing; we are undone, if God take his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this. How exceeding sinful, how exceeding miserable, was he, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly; "Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet *take not thy holy Spirit from me*," (see 2 Sam. vii. 15.) "but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist."

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of divine grace, v. 12. David finds two ill effects of his sin; (1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*. A child of God knows no true nor solid joy, but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded, and our hopes shaken; when we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears, shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, "*Uphold me with thy free Spirit*; I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair; Lord, sustain me; my own spirit" (though the spirit of a man will go far toward the sustaining his infirmity) "is not sufficient, if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counter-work the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working

freely," (and that makes those free, whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;) "thy ingenious princely Spirit." He was conscious to himself of having acted, in the matter of Uriah, very disingenuously, and unlike a prince; his behaviour was base and paltry: "Lord," says he, "let thy Spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me." A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

II. See what David here promises, v. 13. Observe, 1. What good work he promises God; *I will teach transgressors thy ways*. David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God's ways; (1.) Our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and, (2.) God's way towards us in pardoning mercy; how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example, for the direction of sinners in repenting; he taught the latter by his own experience, for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. 2. What good effect he promises himself from his doing this; "*Sinners shall be converted unto thee*, and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee." The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors, is, their conversion to God; that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, Jam. v. 20.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; *and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*. 15. O LORD, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. 16. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

I. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, enforcing both petitions from a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promises with thankfulness to show forth.

1. He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promises that then he would praise God, v. 14. The particular sin he prays against, is, blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto, perhaps, he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and, hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy, "*Deliver*

me from blood-guiltiness; let me not lie under the guilt of the kind I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again." Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer, he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation, he will deliver from guilt; for the salvation he is the God of, is, salvation from sin. We may therefore plead this with him, "Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin." He promises, that, if God would deliver him, *his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness*; God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy, and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would comfort himself in, and therefore sing of; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it.

2. He prays for the grace of God, and promises to improve that grace to his glory; (v. 15.) "*O Lord, open thou my lips*, not only that I may teach and instruct sinners," (which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose, unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned,) "but that *my mouth may show forth thy praise*; not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but a heart enlarged in praise." Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence toward God: it cast a damp particularly upon his praises; when he had lost the joys of his salvation, his harp was hung upon the willow-trees; therefore he prays, "*Lord, open my lips*, put my heart in tune for praise again." To them that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins says effectually, *Ephphatha—Be opened*; and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God, as Zacharias did? Luke i. 64.

III. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent, contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with.

1. He knew well that the sacrificing of beasts was, in itself, of no account with God; (v. 16.) *Thou desirest not sacrifice, (else would I give it with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace,) thou delightest not in burnt-offering*. Here see how glad David would have been to give thousands of rams, to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger, by reason of sin, would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, Mic. vi. 6, 7. But see how little God valued this! As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had; *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not*. As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him.

2. He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God; (v. 17.) *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit*. See here, (1.) What the good work is, that is wrought in every true penitent; a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires, in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair, (as we say, when a man

is undone, His heart is broken,) but a necessary humiliation, and sorrow, for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God; a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in us! (2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this; it is *the sacrifice of God*; not one, but many, it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin, is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin; but the breaking of our hearts for sin, is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it, (he provides this lamb for a burnt-offering,) and he will accept of it. That which pleased God, was, not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin, and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken vessels, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican; and he thought very meanly of himself, but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favour upon a *broken and contrite heart*, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.—lvii. 15.

III. David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God; (v. 18.) *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion*, that is, (1.) "To all the particular worshippers in Zion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding, wasting, sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name." Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves, know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or, (2.) To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands, and saddened the hearts, of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries: he was likewise afraid lest he, being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those public interests which he had damaged and endangered. He prays, that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work, which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays, not only that God would do good to Zion, as he did to other places, by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there; that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, [1.] When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to

begin with that, *Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come.* [2.] The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the public interests by our sins, should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, *Ps. 19.* If God would show himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the public services of his house; (1.) Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with burnt-offerings, with whole burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer, not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices, upon his altar. (2.) Acceptably to God; "*Thou shalt be pleased with them;* we shall have reason to hope so, when we perceive the sin taken away, which threatened to hinder thine acceptance." Note, It is a great comfort to a good man, to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their public assemblies; how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him, and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of them.

PSALM LII.

David, no doubt, was in very great grief, when he said to Abiathar, (*1 Sam. xxii. 22.*) *I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house, which were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein, as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne, I. He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, v. 1. II. He accuses him, convicts him, and aggravates his crimes, v. 2-4. III. He passes sentence upon him, v. 5. IV. He foretells the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, v. 6, 7. V. He comforts himself in the mercy of God, and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, v. 8, 9. In singing this psalm, we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.*

To the chief musician, Maschil. A psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

1. **W**HY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man! the goodness of God *endureth* continually. 2. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3. Thou lovest evil more than good, *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4. Thou lovest all-devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. 5. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever: he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now, at length, saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety, for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided with arms and victuals, he, by a wife, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with both; Doeg an Edomite happened to be there, and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor; upon which accusation, Saul grounded a

very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests; and Doeg, the prosecutor, was the executioner, *1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c.*

In these verses,

I. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, *Ps. 1.* Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but, if he was, he gained no reputation to himself by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for those that wear a sword, to conquer those that wear an ephod. However, he was, by his office, a *mighty man*, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself, not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it, and glory in it, when we have done; not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it; not only to justify it, but to magnify it, and value ourselves upon it. They that glory in their sin, glory in their shame; and then it becomes yet more shameful; mighty men are often mischievous men, and *boast of their heart's desire*, *x. 3.* It is uncertain how the following words come in; *The goodness of God endures continually.* Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question. The patience and forbearance of God (the great proofs of his goodness) are abused by sinners, to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it. But it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to show, 1. The sinfulness of his sin; "God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him, have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloryest in being so." 2. The folly of it; "Thou thinkest, with the mischief which thou boastest of, (so artfully contrived, and so successfully carried on,) to ruin down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken, *the goodness of God endures continually* for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them." The enemies in vain boast in their mischief, while we have God's mercy to boast in.

II. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, *Ps. 2-4.* He accuses him of the wickedness of his tongue, (that unruly evil full of deadly poison,) and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with. 1. Malice; his tongue does mischief, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him: he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord whom he hated. 2. Falsehood; it was a deceitful tongue that he did this mischief with; (*Ps. 4.*) he loved lying, (*Ps. 3.*) and this sharp razor did work deceitfully, (*Ps. 2.*) that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had acted very plausibly toward them; though he was an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings; and paid his respects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; therein he put a force upon himself, (for he was *detained before the Lord*;) but thus he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief. Or, it may refer to the information itself, which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was, in substance, true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours put upon it; and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue. He told the truth, but not all the

truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he showed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul, but respectful to him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying, to be able to say, "There was some truth in what we said," if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. 3. Subtlety in sin; "*Thy tongue devises mischiefs*;" it speaks the mischief which thy heart devises." The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the Devil in it. 4. Affection to sin; "*Thou lovest evil more than good*;" that is, thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldst rather please Saul, by telling a lie, than please God, by speaking truth." Those are of Doeg's spirit, who, instead of being pleased (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves.

III. He reads his doom, and denounces the judgments of God against him for his wickedness; (v. 5.) "Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord, and cut them off, and therefore *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever*." Sons of perdition actively, shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy, the priests of the Lord, his ministers, and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned; 1. To be driven out of the church; *He shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle*, not thy dwelling-place, but God's; so it is most probably understood. "Thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shalt have no benefit either by oracle or offering." Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house, who had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was *detained* there, he was weary of his service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family; it was very fit, therefore, that he should be taken away, and plucked out thence; we should forbid one of our house, that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances, if we make an ill use of them. 2. To be driven out of the world; "*He shall root thee out of the land of the living*," in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted." When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever; as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

6. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: 7. Lo, *this is the man that made not God his strength*; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. 8. But *I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God*: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. 9. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*: and I will

wait on thy name; for *it is good before thy saints*.

David was at this time in great distress, the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him trampling, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, 2 Cor. ii. 14. David here triumphs,

1. In the fall of Doeg. Yet, lest this should look like personal revenge, he does not speak of it as his own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them; 1. To the glory of God; *They shall see and fear*; (v. 6.) they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand, and before whom, therefore, we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, and make them afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure, cxix. 120. Rev. xv. 3, 4. 2. To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational, serious, laughter, as *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him*, ii. 4. He shall appear ridiculous, and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him; (v. 7.) *Lo, this is the man that made not God his Strength*. The fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man, cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a newly-erected fabric tumbles down, every one immediately inquires, where was the fault in the building of it? Now, that which ruined Doeg's prosperity, was, (1.) That he did not build it upon a rock; *He made not God his Strength*, he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him in the least. These wretchedly deceive themselves, that think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion. (2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself; *He trusted in the abundance of his riches*, which, he imagined, were *laid up for many years*; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it; he was resolved to stick at nothing, for the securing and advancing of his honour and power; right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this, he thought, would strengthen him; they may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now that it is fallen, and himself buried in the ruins of it.

II. In his own stability; (v. 8, 9.) "This mighty man is plucked up by the roots; but *I am like a green olive-tree*, planted and rooted, fixed and flourishing; he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained, as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there." Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God, shall be like green olive-trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree, (xxxvii. 35.) which bears no useful fruit, though it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing, (xcii. 14.) and *with its fatness honours God and man*, (Judg. ix. 9.) deriving its root and fatness from the good Olive, Rom. xi. 17.

Now, what must we do, that we may be as green olive-trees?

1. We must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace; "I see what comes of men's trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever*; not in the world, but in God, not in my own merit, but in God's mercy, which dispenses its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness." This mercy is for ever, it is constant and unchangeable, and its gifts will continue to all eternity; we must, therefore, for ever trust in it, and never come off from that foundation.

2. We must live a life of thankfulness and holy joy in God; (v. 9.) "*I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it, hast avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink; and hast performed thy promise to me;*" which he was as sure would be done in due time, as if it were done already. It contributes very much to the beauty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God; and it is certain that we never want matter for praise.

3. We must live a life of expectation, and humble dependence upon God; *I will wait on thy name*; I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thyself known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me, and willing to tarry till the time appointed for them; *for it is good before thy saints*;" or, *in the opinion and judgment of thy saints*, with whom David heartily concurs. *Communis census fidelium—All the saints are of this mind.* (1.) That God's name is good in itself; that God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given than this, that would be our refuge and strong tower. (2.) That it is very good for us to wait on that name; that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits, when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty, when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to hope, and quietly *wait for, the salvation of the Lord*, Lam. iii. 26. All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his guidance, but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints, let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly; *Turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually*, Hos. xii. 6.

PSALM LIII.

God speaks once, yea twice, and it were well if man would even then perceive it: God, in this psalm, speaks twice, for this is the same almost *verbatim* with the 14th psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a blushing, and trembling, because of them; and this is what we are with so much difficulty brought to, that there is need of line upon line to this purport. The word, as a convincing word, is compared to a hammer, the strokes whereof must be frequently repeated. God, by the psalmist, here, I. Shows us how bad we are, v. 1. II. Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge, v. 2, 3. III. He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners, v. 4, 5. IV. He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people, v. 6. Some little variation there is between Ps. xiv. and this, but none considerable; between v. 5, 6. there, and v. 5. here; some expressions there used, are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and, instead of that, is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked; which alteration, with some others, he made by divine direction, when he delivered it the second time to the chief musician. In singing it, we ought to lament the corruption of the human nature, and the wretched degeneracy of the world we live in, yet rejoicing, in hope of the great salvation.

To the chief musician upon Mahalath, Maschil.
A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good*. 2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. 3. Everyone of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*. 4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. 5. There were they in great fear *where* no fear was; for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee; thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them. 6. Oh that the salvation of Israel *were* come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it.

1. The fact of sin; is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a Witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, v. 2. All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before him.

2. The fault of sin; is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity, (v. 1, 4.) it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in, (v. 1, 3.) it is an evil thing, it is the worst of evils, it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, v. 3.

3. The fountain of sin; how comes it that men are so bad? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes: *they say in their hearts, "There is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of."* Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

4. The folly of sin; he is a fool, (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right,) that harbours such corrupt thoughts; atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. They that do not seek God, do not understand, they are like brute beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason, as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge; these may truly be said to know nothing, that do not know God, v. 4.

5. The filthiness of sin; sinners are corrupt, (v. 1.) their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is, the more vile it is when it is depraved; as that of the angels, *Corruptio optimi est pessima—Nothing, when corrupted, is so bad as the best*. Their iniquity is abominable, it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he *hates nothing that he has made*. It makes men filthy, altogether filthy; wilful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of heaven and of the holy angels. What decency soever pretend

sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world.

6. The fruit of sin; see to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone—because they will not *run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up, as they eat bread*; as if they were not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time; they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

7. The fear and shame that attend sin; (v. 3.) *There were they in great fear*, who had made God their Enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear; *the wicked flee when none pursues*. See the ground of this fear; it is because God has formerly *scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people*; not only broken their power, and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those *scattered at the grave's mouth*, cxi. 7. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the *camp of the saints, and the beloved city*, Rev. xx. 9. The apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, *because God has despised them*; to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear, whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despises them, we may.

Lastly, The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil; (v. 6.) There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times, that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. (1.) God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. (2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name *Jesus*, for *he shall save his people from their sins*, Matth. i. 21.

PSALM LIV.

The key of this psalm hangs at the door, for the title tells us upon what occasion it was penned,—when the inhabitants of Ziph, men of Judah, (types of Judas the traitor,) betrayed David to Saul, by informing him where he was, and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice; (1 Sam. xxiii. 19.—xxvi. 1.) and it is upon record, to their everlasting infamy. The psalm is sweet; the former part of it, perhaps, was meditated when he was in his distress, and put into writing when the danger was over, with the addition of the two last verses, which speak his thankfulness for the deliverance, which yet might be written in faith, even then when he was in the midst of his fright. Here, I. He complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, v. 1.—3. II. He comforts himself with an assurance of the divine favour and protection, and that, in due time, his enemies should be confounded, and he delivered, v. 4.—7. What time we are in distress, we may comfortably sing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil. A psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

1. **S**AVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words

of my mouth. 3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here,

1. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought, when David was retired into the country, he should not have been pursued; into a desert country, he should not have been discovered; and into his own country, he should not have been betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy, till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these Ziphims! It is well that God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, Mic. vii. 5.

2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, v. 1, 2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him; and begs he would save him from his enemies, and judge him, plead his cause, and judge for him. David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers, (v. 2.) which even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven; *Hear my prayer*, which comes from my heart, and *give ear to the words of my mouth*.

3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, v. 3. (1.) They are *strangers*; such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites; "They have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done." The worst treatment may be expected from those who, having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. (2.) They are *oppressors*; such was Saul, who, as a king, should have used his power for the protection of all his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing is so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. Paul's greatest perils were by his *own countrymen*, and by *false brethren*; (2 Cor. xi. 26.) and so were David's. (3.) They were very formidable and threatening; they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. (4.) They were very spiteful and malicious; *They seek after my soul*; they hunt for the precious life, no less will satisfy them. We may, in faith, pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance, to such cruel bloody men. (5.) They were very profane and atheistical, and, for this reason, he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them; *They have not set God before them*; they have quite cast off the thoughts of God, they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that, in fighting against his people, they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, From those who do not set God before them no good is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold these that have broken through the fear of God? *Selah*; *Mark this*. Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times; for if we do not, we are in danger of becoming desperate.

4. Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. 5. He

shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O LORD, *for it is good*. 7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble; and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

1. He was sure that he had God on his side; that God took his part; (v. 4.) he speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, *Behold, God is mine Helper*. If we be for him, he is for us; and if he be for us, we shall have such help in him, that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our Helper; *The Lord is with them that uphold my soul*. Compare cxviii. 7. *"The Lord taketh my part with them that help me"*. There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me, if he did not help them." Every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. He means, "The Lord is he that upholds my soul, and keeps me from tiring in my work, and sinking under my burthens." He that by his providence upholds all things, by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, who will, in due time, save his people, does, in the mean time, sustain them, and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

2. God taking part with him, he doubted not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him; (v. 5.) *"He shall reward evil unto mine enemies that observe me"*, seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me, the righteous God will return upon their own heads." David would not render evil to them, but he knew God would; *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear*. The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge: and, for this reason, we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, *Vengeance is mine*. But he prays, *Cut them off in thy truth*. This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of faith, for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatenings, as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

3. He promises to give thanks to God for all the experience he had had of his goodness to him; (v. 6.) *I will sacrifice unto thee*. Though sacrifices were expensive, yet, when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him, David would not only offer them, but offer them freely, and without grudging. All our spiritual sacrifices must, in this sense, be free-will offerings, for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the ceremony; he will mind the substance, *I will praise thy name*. A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept; *"I will praise thy name, for it is good"*. Thy name is not only great but good, and therefore to be praised; to praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us, (xcii. 1.) therefore *I will praise thy name*.

4. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done; (v. 7.) *I will praise thy name, and say, "He has delivered me; this shall be my song then."* That which he rejoices in, is, a complete deliverance; *He has delivered me from all trouble*; and a deliverance to his heart's content; *Mine eye has seen its desire upon mine enemies*; not seen them cut off and ruin-

ed, but forced to retreat; tidings being brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, 1 Sam. xxiii. 27, 28. All David desired, was, to be himself safe; when he saw Saul draw off his forces, he saw his desire; *He has delivered me from all trouble*. Either, (1.) With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress, *"He has delivered me from all trouble hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on mine enemies; therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble."* We should thus, in our greatest straits, encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or, (2.) With this thought he magnified his present deliverance, when the fright is over, that it was an earnest of his further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. "He that has begun to deliver me from this trouble, shall deliver me from all troubles, and shall, at length, give me to see my desire upon mine enemies." This may, perhaps, point at Christ, of whom David was a type; God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it; and all things are said to be put under his feet; for though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and he shall see his desire upon them. However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul does, (like David here) 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. *He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom*.

PSALM LV.

It is the conjecture of many expositors, that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that the particular enemy he here speaks of, that dealt treacherously with him, was Ahithophel; and some will therefore make David's troubles here typical of Christ's suffering, and Ahithophel's treachery a figure of Judas's, because they both hanged themselves. But there is nothing in it that is particularly applied to Christ in the New Testament. David was in great distress when he penned this psalm. I. He prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, v. 1. . 8. II. He prays that God would manifest his displeasure against his enemies, and pleads their great wickedness and treachery, (v. 9. . 15.) and again, v. 20, 21. III. He assures himself that God would, in due time, appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the hopes of it, and encourages others to trust in God, (v. 16. . 19.) and again, v. 22, 23. In singing this psalm, we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose case it comes nearer, foreseeing that there will be, at last, indignation and wrath to the persecutors, a salvation and joy to the persecuted.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil. A psalm of David.

1. **G**IVE ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; 3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. 4. My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then I would flee

away, and be at rest. 7. *Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.* Selah. 8. *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.*

In these verses, we have,

I. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burthen; *Give ear to my prayer, O God, v. 1, 2.* He does not set down the petitions he offered up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which, at every period, his heart lifted up to God, and grant an answer of peace to them; *Attend to me, hear me.* Saul would not hear his petitions, his other enemies regarded not his pleas, but, "Lord, be thou pleased to hearken to me. *Hide not thyself from my supplication;* either as one unconcerned, and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it, or as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer." If we, in our prayers, sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts, to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts, from us.

II. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows, and often in tears; (*v. 2.*) "*I mourn in my complaint,*" (or, in my meditation, my melancholy musings,) "and I make a noise; I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me." Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and thus are, in some measure, lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? *v. 3.* It is *because of the voice of the enemy;* the menaces and insults of Absalom's party, that swelled, and hectoring, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city, as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the Son of David, *Away with him, crucify him.* Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their *oppression*, and the hardship he was thereby reduced to; *They cast iniquity upon me.* They could not justly charge David with any mal-administration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they loaded him with calumnies. Though they found no iniquity in him, relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant fit to be expelled. Innocency itself is no security against violent and lying tongues. They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heat and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him. This made him mourn, and the more, because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered to his name, *David, a beloved one.*

III. David trembling, and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fear seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances had signalized his courage, and yet, when the danger was surprising and imminent, his heart failed him; let not the stout man therefore glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in strength. Now that David's heart is *sore-pained within him, the terrors of death are fallen upon him, v. 4.* Fearfulness of mind and trembling of body came upon him, and horror covered and over-

whelmed him; (*v. 5.*) when without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears; and, if it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright. Sometimes David's faith made him, in a manner, fearless, and he could boldly say, when surrounded with enemies, *I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.* But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannise; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was, in this fright, to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, (*v. 6.*) said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, *Oh that I had wings like a dove!* Much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now that it was become a rebellious city, he longed to get clear of it, and, like the prophet, wishes he had *in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that he might leave his people, and go from them, for they were an assembly of treacherous men,* Jer. ix. 2. This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, *Arise, let us flee, and make speed to depart,* 2 Sam. xv. 14.

Observe,

(1.) How he would make his escape; he was so surrounded with enemies, that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore he wishes, *Oh that I had wings,* not like a hawk that flies strongly, but *like a dove* that flies swiftly; he wishes for wings, not to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey, for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dove-like spirit, and therefore the wings of an eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can, and thus would David fly.

(2.) What he would make his escape from; from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove that cannot endure noise.

(3.) What he aimed at, in making this escape; not victory, but rest; "*I would fly away, and be at rest, v. 6.*" I would fly any whither, if it were to a barren frightful wilderness, ever so far off, so I might be quiet," *v. 7.* Note, Peace and quietness, in silence and solitude, are what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noise and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, that they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves; and, if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world, to perfect and everlasting rest.

9. Destroy, O LORD, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11. Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 12. For it was not an enemy that reproached me: then could I have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself

from him; 13. But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14. We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company. 15. Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, *and* among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wit's end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy.

Observe here,

I. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices.

1. He complains of the city Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom and fell off from David, so that he had none there, but his own guards and servants, that he could repose any confidence in; *How is that faithful city become a harlot!* David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart, did himself see nothing but *violence and strife in the city*; (v. 9.) for, when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David, they grew mischievous one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, v. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city, were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation, were in the midst of it; wickedness, all manner of wickedness, is in the midst thereof; *Jusque datum sceleri—Wickedness was legalized.* Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing, *departed not from her streets*, v. 11. It may be meant of their base and barbarous usage of David's friends, and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could, by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and, which is more, the holy city; and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? *Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty?* Lam. ii. 15. Is Jerusalem, the head quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, so that he cannot reside in it? Let us not be surprised at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

2. He complains of one of the ring-leaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him; it was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power, or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion; *There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee*; 2 Sam. xv. 3. That and similar accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it? "Not a sworn enemy, nor Shimei, or any of the nonjurors; then I could have borne it, for I should not have expected better from them;" and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses; "not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hid myself and my counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me; but it was thou, a

man, mine equal," v. 13. The Chaldee-paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was *among the conspirators with Absalom*, (2 Sam. xv. 31.) for he was *the king's counsellor*, 1 Chron. xxvii. 33. "*It was thou, a man, mine equal*, one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as mine own soul, to whom I had communicated all my secrets, and who knew my mind as well as I myself did; my guide, with whom I advised, and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council, and prime-minister of state; my intimate acquaintance and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuses me. I have been kind to him, but I find him thus basely ungrateful; I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus basely treacherous; nay, and he could not have done me the one half of the mischief he does, if I had not showed him so much respect." All this must needs be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom friend; (v. 14.) "*We took counsel together*, spent many an hour together, with a great deal of pleasure in religious discourse;" or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, "*We joined ourselves together to the assembly*; I gave him the right-hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then we walked to the house of God in company, to attend the public service." Note, (1.) There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom, perhaps, for a long time, we can discern no difference; but the Searcher of hearts does. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the Publican went together to the temple, to pray; but, sooner or later, they that are perfect, and they that are not, will be made manifest. (2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far, and very long, in a profession of religion, while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David, none was more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. (3.) We must not wonder, if we be sadly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things, religion and friendship; David himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make similar disappointments the more tolerable to us.

II. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of, and to comfort ourselves in; as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays,

1. That God would disperse them, as he did the Babel-builders; (v. 9.) "*Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues*; blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another. Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another." This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest, divided against itself, cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them, as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederates against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened, and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing which God executed, Numb. xvi. 30. But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent; (v. 15.) "*Let death seize upon them* by divine warrant, and *let them go down quick into*

hell; let them be dead, and buried, and so, utterly destroyed, in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them." The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall *therefore* live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting, ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

16. As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. 18. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me. 19. God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant. 21. *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords. 22. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

In these verses,

1. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain; (v. 16.) "As for me, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine: this I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by; *I will call upon God*, and commit myself to him, and *the Lord shall save me*." Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, in a right manner, shall be saved, Rom. x. 13. He resolves to be both fervent, and frequent, in this duty. 1. He will pray fervently; *I will pray and cry aloud*. "*I will meditate*," (so the former word signifies,) "I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come thence." Then we pray aright, when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is, lifting up the heart to God. Having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud: the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed, and yet more excited, by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice. 2. He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day, evening, and morning, and at noon. It is probable that this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it, now that he is in his distress. Then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble, when we do not then first begin to seek acquaintance with God, but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer going. They that think three meals a day little enough for the body, ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task. As it is fit that in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit that in the midst of the day we should retire a

while to converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day; (Dan. vi. 10.) and noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, Acts x. 9. Let not us be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing; "He shall hear my voice, and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome."

II. He assures himself that God would, in due time, give an answer of peace to his prayers.

1. That he himself should be delivered, and his fears prevented; those fears with which he was much disordered, (v. 4, 5.) by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope; (v. 18.) *God has delivered my soul in peace*, that is, he will deliver it; David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace, he delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that; those are safe and easy whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which *passes all understanding*, Phil. iv. 7. David, in his fright thought all were against him; but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined, his interest proved better than he expected, and this he gives to God the glory of; for it is he that raises us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us. There were many with him, for though his subjects deserted him, and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him, and the good angels. With an eye of faith he now sees himself surrounded, as Elisha was, with chariots of fire, and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, *There are many with me*, more *with me than against me*, 2 Kings vi. 16, 17.

2. That his enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down. They had frightened him with their menaces, (v. 3.) but here he says enough to frighten them, and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy, for they could not ease themselves of their fears, as David could, by faith in God.

(1.) David here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down.

[1.] They are impious and profane, and stand in no awe of God, of his authority or wrath; (v. 19.) "*Because they have no changes*, no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, *therefore they fear not God*, they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness, and by which they are certainly marked for destruction.

[2.] They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements; (v. 20.) "*He has put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him*, that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay to whom he had given all possible encouragement to expect kindness from him. He has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, and has broken his covenant, both with God and man, has perfidiously violated his engagement to both;" than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

[3.] They are base and hypocritical, pretending friendship while they design mischief; (v. 21.) "*The words of his mouth*" (probably he means Ahithophel particularly) "*were smoother than butter, and softer than oil*, so courteous was he and obliging, so free in his professions of respect and

kindness, and the proffers of his service; yet, at the same time, *war was in his heart*, and all this courtesy was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them, that they were as drawn swords designed to stab." They smile in a man's face, and cut his throat at the same time, as Joab, that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy; he flatters men into their ruin; *when he speaks fair, believe him not.*

(2.) David here foretells their ruin.

[1.] God shall afflict them, and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people; and this, in answer to the prayers of his people; *God shall hear and afflict them*, hear the cries of the oppressed, and speak terror to their oppressors, even he that abides of old, who is God from everlasting, and world without end, and who sits Judge from the beginning of time, and has always presided in the affairs of the children of men. Mortal men, though ever so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God, and are a very unequal match for him. This the saints have comforted themselves with, in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies; (Hab. i. 12.) *Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord?*

[2.] God shall bring them down, not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction; (v. 23.) to the bottomless pit, which is called *destruction*, Job xxvi. 6. He afflicted them, (v. 19.) to see if that would humble and reform them; but they not being wrought upon by that, he shall, at last, bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction, will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction. They are bloody and deceitful men, the worst of men, and therefore shall not live out half their days, not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord of life, the righteous Judge, has appointed, with whom the number of our months is; but he has determined to cut them off, by an untimely death, in the midst of their days. They were bloody men, and cut others off, and therefore God will justly cut them off: they were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one half perhaps of what was their due; and now God will cut them short, though not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

III. He encourages himself, and all good people, to commit themselves to God with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so; (v. 23.) "*I will trust in thee*, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit; when bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days, I shall still live by faith in thee." And this he will have others to do; (v. 22.) "*Cast thy burthen upon the Lord*, whoever thou art, that art burthened, and whatever the burthen is. *Cast thy gift upon the Lord*," so some read it; "Whatever blessings God has bestowed upon thee to enjoy, commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him." Or, "Whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time." *Cast thy care upon the Lord*, so the LXX, to which the apostle refers, 1 Pet. v. 7. Care is a burthen, it makes the heart stoop; (Prov. xii. 25.) we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him; let him do as seemeth him good, and we will be satisfied. To cast our burthen upon God, is, to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised, 1. That he will sustain us, both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the

sucking-child, will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit, as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised to free us immediately from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted. 2. That he will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to be so shaken by any troubles, as to quit either their duty to God, or their comfort in him. However, he will not suffer them to be moved for ever; (as some read it;) though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

PSALM LVI.

It seems by this, and many other psalms, that, even in times of the greatest trouble and distress, David never hung his harp upon the willow-trees, never unstrung it, or laid it by; but that, when his dangers and fears were greatest, he was still in tune for singing God's praises. He was in imminent peril when he penned this psalm, at least, when he meditated it; yet even then his meditation of God was sweet. I. He complains of the malice of his enemies, and begs mercy for himself, and justice against them, v. 1, 2, 5, 7. II. He confides in God, being assured that he took his part, comforting himself with this, that *therefore* he was safe, and should be victorious, and that, while he lived, he should praise God, v. 3, 4, 8, 13. How pleasantly may a good Christian, in singing this psalm, rejoice in God, and praise him for what he will do, as well as for what he has done.

To the chief musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

1. **B**E merciful unto me, O God; for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me. 2. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High. 3. What time I am afraid I will trust in thee. 4. In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. 5. Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts *are* against me for evil. 6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. 7. Shall they escape by iniquity? in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

David, in this psalm, by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, then when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 Sam. xxi. 10, 11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but with so little ruffle to his temper, that then he penned both this psalm and the 34th. This is called *Michtam—A golden psalm*. So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is upon *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, which signifies, *The silent dove afar off*. Some apply that to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove on which to fly away. He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient, as a dove, was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary, (lxxxiv. 3.) was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries, there he was like the doves of the vallies, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God, nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers, and a

pattern to Christians, who, wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves.

In this former part of the psalm,

I. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to show what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was, that God should appear against them; (*v. 1.*) *Be merciful unto me, O God.* That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire; and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free rich mercy. He prays he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul, he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines; "Lord," (says he,) "be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone." The mercy of God is what we may flee to, and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous; (*v. 2.*) "*They be many that fight against me*, and think to overpower me with numbers; take notice of this, *O thou most High*, and make it to appear that, wherein they deal proudly, thou art above them." It is a point of honour to come into the help of one against many. And if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may, upon good grounds, boast, that there are more with us; for (as that great general said) "How many do we reckon him for?"

2. That they were very barbarous; they would swallow him up, (*v. 1.*) and again, *v. 2.* They sought to devour him; no less would serve, they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, xxvii. 2. *Man* would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good man, if he could. "They are men, weak and frail; make them to know that they are so," ix. 20.

3. That they were very unanimous; (*v. 6.*) *They gather themselves together*; though they were many, and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David.

4. That they were very powerful; quite too hard for him, if God did not help him; "*They fight against me*; (*v. 2.*) *They oppress me*; (*v. 1.*) I am almost overcome and borne down by them, and reduced to the last extremity."

5. That they were very subtle and crafty; (*v. 6.*) "They hide themselves; they industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps; they observe every thing I say and do, with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of." Thus Christ's enemies watched him, Luke xx. 20. Or, "They have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me."

6. That they were very spiteful and malicious; they put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, though ever so honestly meant, and prudently expressed; (*v. 5.*) "They wrest my words, put them upon the rack, to extort that out of them which was never in them;" and so they made him an offender for a word, (Isa. xxix. 21.) misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David, all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied; they continually waited for his soul, it was the life, the precious life, they hunted for; it was his death they longed for, *v. 6.* They fought daily against him, (*v. 1.*) and would daily swallow him up, (*v. 2.*) and every day they wrested his words, *v. 5.* Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms, or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him. Such as this, is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used; so persecuted they the prophets.

II. He encourages himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, *v. 3, 4.* In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection. 1. He resolves to make God his Confidence, then when dangers were most threatening, and all other confidences failed; "*What time I am afraid*, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without, and most timorous within, then *I will trust in thee*, and thereby my fears shall be silenced. Note, There are some times which are, in a special manner, times of fear with God's people; in these times, it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart, and keep it in peace. 2. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them; (*v. 4.*) "*In God I will praise*, not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed; *in God*, in his strength, and by his assistance, I will both glory in his word, and give him the glory of it." Some understand, by *his word*, his providences, every event that he orders and appoints; "When I speak well of God, with him I will speak well of every thing that he does." 3. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers; "*When in God I have put my trust*, I am safe, I am easy, and *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me*; it is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission." As we must not trust to an arm of flesh, when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

III. He foresees, and foretells, the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices; (*v. 7.*) *Shall they escape by iniquity?* They hope to escape God's judgments, as they escape men's, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No, they certainly shall not; the sin of sinners will never be their security, nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will, in his anger, cast down, and cast out, such people, Rom. ii. 3. None are raised so high, or settled so firmly, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities, and from their confidences; *Who knows the power of God's anger*; how high it can reach, and how forcibly it can strike?

8. Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book? 9. When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me. 10. In God I will praise his word; in the LORD will I praise his word. 11. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me

12. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death; *wilt not thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living!

Several things David here comforts himself with, in the day of his distress and fear.

I. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, *v. 8.* 1. Of all the inconveniences of his state; *Thou tellest my wanderings, my flittings*, so the old translation. David was now but a young man, (under thirty,) and yet he had had many removes, from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took, by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people; and he does not cast out from his care and love those whom men have cast out from their acquaintance and converse. 2. Of all the impressions thus made upon his spirit. When he was wandering, he was often weeping; and therefore prays, "*Put thou my tears into thy bottle*, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance." God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both those for their sins, and those for their afflictions. This intimates, (1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths, are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. *I have seen thy tears*, 2 Kings xx. 5. *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*, Jer. xxxi. 18. (2.) That he will remember them, and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears, (2 Tim. i. 4.) and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up, and sealed among God's treasures; and when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people's eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise; God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy, who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear, will come up a pearl.

II. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement; (*v. 9.*) "*When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back*; I need no other weapons than prayers and tears; *this I know, for God is for me*, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me; and if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail?" The saints have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; which, if they do in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back; their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, Eph. vi. 18.

III. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, *v. 10, 11.* Here he repeats, with a strong pathos, what he had said; (*v. 4.*) "*In God will I praise his word*; I will firmly depend upon the promise, for the sake of him that made it, who

is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness, enough to make it good." When we give credit to a man's bill, we honour him that drew it; so when we do, and suffer, for God, in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in God, he looks with a holy contempt upon the threatening power of man; "*In God have I put my trust*, and in him only, and therefore *I will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, though I know very well what he would do if he could," *v. 11.* This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, whom he makes a Christian hero, Heb. xiii. 6. We may each of us boldly say, *The Lord is my Helper*, and then *I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

IV. That he was in bonds to God; (*v. 12.*) "*Thy vows are upon me, O God*; not upon me as a burden which I am loaded with, but as a badge which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant; not upon me as fetters that hamper me, (such are superstitious vows,) but upon me as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty. Thy vows are upon me, the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a Witness, but a Party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make." It is probable that he means especially these vows which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligations of, when his fright was over. Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy, that *the vows of God are upon us*; our baptismal vows, renewed at the Lord's table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corrections, by these we are bound to live to God.

V. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him; *I will render praises unto thee*. This is part of the performance of his vows; for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy, and, when the mercy is received, must be made good. When we study what we shall render, this is the least we can resolve upon, to render praises to God. Poor returns for rich receivings! Two things he will praise God for;

1. For what he had done for him; (*v. 13.*) "*Thou hast delivered my soul, my life, from death*, which was just ready to seize me." If God had delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin. If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him; "*Thou hast delivered my soul from death*, and so hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling; thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the lesser; thou hast begun a good work, and therefore thou wilt carry it on, and perfect it." This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience, or as the matter of his praise, raising his expectations; and those that know how to praise in faith, will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect, as well as in possession. See here, (1.) What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name

Those that think they stand must take heed lest they fall, because the best stand no longer than God is pleased to uphold them. We are weak, our way is slippery, many stumbling-blocks are in it, our spiritual enemies are industrious to thrust us down, and therefore we are concerned by faith and prayer to commit ourselves to his care, who *keeps the feet of his saints*. (2.) What he builds this hope upon; "*Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therein hast magnified thy power and goodness, and put me into a capacity of receiving further mercy from thee; and now wilt thou not secure and crown thy own work?*" God never brought his people out of Egypt, to slay them in the wilderness. He that in conversion delivers the soul from so great a death as sin is, will not fail to *preserve it to his heavenly kingdom*. (3.) What he designs in these hopes; *that I may walk before God, in the light of the living*, that is, [1.] "That I may get to heaven, the only land of light and life; for in this world darkness and death reign." [2.] "That I may do my duty, while this life lasts." Note, This we should aim at in all our desires and expectations of deliverance both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service; *that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear*.

PSALM LVII.

This psalm is very like that which goes next before it; it was penned upon a like occasion, when David was both in danger of trouble, and in temptation to sin; it begins as that did, *Be merciful to me*; the method also is the same; I. He begins with prayer and complaint, yet not without some assurance of speeding in his request, v. 1. 6. II. He concludes with joy and praise, v. 7. 11. So that hence we may take direction and encouragement, both in our supplications, and in our thanksgivings, and may offer both to God in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician, *Al-taschith*, *Micham* of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

1. **B**E merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me. 3. He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4. My soul is among lions; and I lie *even* among them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth. 6. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, *Al-taschith—Destroy not*. Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set, others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm; *Destroy not*; that is, David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of doing it, and his servants would fain have done it; No, says David, *destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4, 6. Or rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to per-

secute David, but still under this limitation, *Destroy him not*; as he permitted Satan to afflict Job, *Only save his life*. David must not be destroyed, for a *blessing is in him*, (Isa. lxxv. 8.) even Christ, the Best of blessings. When David was in the cave, in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart toward God; and happy they that have such good thoughts as these in their minds, when they are in danger!

I. He supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, v. 1, 2. Seeing himself surrounded with enemies, he looks up to God with that suitable prayer, *Be merciful to me, O Lord*; which he again repeats, and it is no vain repetition; *Be merciful unto me*. It was the publican's prayer, Luke xviii. 13. It is pity that any should use it slightly and prefantly, should cry, *God be merciful to us, or, Lord, have mercy upon us*, when they mean only to express their wonder, or surprise, or vexation, but God and his mercy are not in all their thoughts. It is with much devout affection that David here prays, "*Be merciful unto me, O Lord; look with compassion upon me, and in thy love and pity redeem me*." To recommend himself to God's mercy, he here professes,

1. That all his dependence is upon God; *My soul trusteth in thee*, v. 1. He did not only profess to trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely on God only, with a sincere devotion and self-dedication, and an entire complacency and satisfaction. He goes to God, and, at the footstool of the throne of his grace, humbly professes his confidence in him; *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge*, as the chickens take shelter under the wings of the hen, when the birds of prey are ready to strike at them, *until these calamities be overpast*. (1.) He was confident his troubles would end well, in due time; *these calamities will be overpast*; the storm will blow over, *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though now distressed, I shall not always be*. Our Lord Jesus comforted himself with this, in his sufferings, (Luke xxii. 37.) *The things concerning me have an end*. (2.) He was very easy under the divine protection, in the mean time. [1.] He comforted himself in the goodness of God's nature, by which he is inclined to succour and protect his people, as the hen is by instinct to shelter her young ones. God comes upon the wing to the help of his people, which denotes a speedy deliverance; (xviii. 10.) and he takes them under his wing, which denotes warmth and refreshment, even when the calamities are upon them; see Matth. xxiii. 37. [2.] In the promise of his word, and the covenant of his grace; for it may refer to the out-stretched wings of the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell, (lxxx. 1.) and whence he gave his oracles. "To God, as the God of grace, will I fly, and his promise shall be my refuge, and a sure passport it will be through all these dangers." God, by his promise, offers himself to us, to be trusted; we by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

2. That all his desire is toward God; (v. 2.) "*I will cry unto God most high*, for succour and relief; to him that is most high will I lift up my soul, and pray earnestly, *even unto God that performs all things for me*." Note, (1.) In every thing that befalls us, we ought to see, and own, the hand of God; whatever is done, is of his performing, in it his counsel is accomplished, and the scripture is fulfilled. (2.) Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear, in the issue, to have been performed for them, and for their benefit. Though God be high, *most high*, yet he condescends so low, as to take care that all things be made to work for good to them. (3.) This is a good reason why we should, in all our straits and difficulties, cry unto him; not only pray, but pray earnestly.

3. That all his expectation is from God; (v. 3.) *He shall send from heaven, and save me.* They that make God their only Refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation, in his way and time. Observe here, (1.) Whence he expects the salvation; from heaven. Look which way he will, on this earth, refuge fails, no help appears: but he looks for it from heaven; they that lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. (2.) What the salvation is that he expects; he trusts that God will save him *from the reproach of those that would swallow him up*, that aimed to ruin him, and, in the mean time, did all they could to vex him. Some read it, *He shall send from heaven, and save me, for he has put to shame him that would swallow me up*; he has disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. (3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to; *God shall send forth his mercy and truth.* God is good in himself, and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy, than to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, xxv. 10.

II. He represents the power and malice of his enemies; (v. 4.) *My soul is among lions*; so fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, that he might have been as safe in a den of lions, as among such men, who were continually roaring against him, and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and *they were themselves set on fire of hell*, Jam. iii. 6. They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men; their *teeth*, which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces, and to eat him up, *were spears and arrows* fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their *tongue*, with which they cursed him, and wounded his reputation, was *as a sharp sword* to cut and kill; see xlii. 10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him, (v. 6.) and shows the issue of them; *"They have prepared a net for my steps, in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; they have digged a pit before me, that I might, ere I was aware, run headlong into it."* See the policies of the church's enemies; see the pains they take to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it. 1. It is indeed some disturbance to David; *My soul is bowed down.* It made him droop, and bring the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But, 2. It was destruction to them; *lives*; they digged a pit for David, *into the midst whereof they are fallen.* The mischief they designed against David, returned upon themselves, and they were embarrassed in their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

III. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name; (v. 5.) *"Whatever comes of me and my interest, be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; and let thy glory be above, or over all the earth, let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee."* Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for it, than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and dis-

grace, he did not pray, *Lord, exalt me*, but, *Lord, exalt thine own name.* Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, immediately withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, *For this cause came I to this hour; Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 27, 28. Or it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance; *"Lord, send from heaven to save me, and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth."* Our best encouragement in prayer, is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore, more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise. 8. Awake up, my glory; awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early. 9. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing unto thee among the nations: 10. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

How strangely is the tune altered here! David's prayers and complaints, by the lively actings of faith, are here, all of a sudden, turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hesannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that, sooner or later, it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

1. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise; (v. 7.) *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.* My heart is *erect, or lifted up*, (so some,) which was bowed down, v. 6. *My heart is fixed*, (1.) With reference to God's providences; it is prepared for every event, being *stayed upon God*, cxii. 7. Isa. xxvi. 3. *My heart is fixed*, and then *none of these things move me*, Acts xx. 24. If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. (2.) With reference to the worship of God; *My heart is fixed to sing and give praise.* It is implied, that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion, further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed; fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; *attending on the Lord without distraction.*

2. How he excites himself to the duty of praise; (v. 8.) *Awake up, my glory—my tongue*; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God; or, *my soul*, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God; we must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to praise God: with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow, in these hymns of praise. *I myself will awake*, not only, *"I will not be dead, and drowsy, and careless, in this work,"* but, *"I will be in the most lively frame, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep."* He will awake *early* to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginnings of a mercy; when God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises.

3. How he pleases himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself, in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to *praise him among the people, and to sing unto him among the nations*, v. 9. This intimates, (1.) That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God. (2.) That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God; he will publish God's praises among the people, that the knowledge and fear and love of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands, he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still *praising God among the people, and singing to him among the nations*; for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John, in his writings, is said to *prophecy again before many peoples and nations*, Rev. x. 11.

4. How he furnishes himself with matter for praise, v. 10. That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, (*God shall send forth his mercy and his truth*, v. 3.) is here the matter of his thanksgiving, *Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, great beyond conception and expression; and thy truth unto the clouds, great beyond discovery*, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them, and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, that is, by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually exalting God's praises to the highest, while David on earth is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, v. 9.

5. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name; (v. 11.) *Be thou exalted, O God*. The same words which he had used, (v. 5.) to sum up his prayers in, he here uses again, (and no vain repetition,) to sum up his praises in; "Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it thyself, *be thou exalted, O God*. In the praises of the church triumphant, thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant, thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both, (Neh. ix. 5.) and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself *above the heavens, and above all the earth: Father, glorify thine own name: Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again.*"

PSALM LVIII.

It is the probable conjecture of some, (Amyraldus particularly,) that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law, upon which he was condemned, unheard, and attainted as a traitor by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and then proclaimed *qui caput gerit lupinum—an outlawed wolf*, whom any man might kill, and no man might protect. The elders, in order to curry favour with Saul, having passed this bill of attainder, it is supposed that David penned this psalm on the occasion. I. He describes their sin, and aggravates that, v. 1. 5. II. He imprecates and foretells their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God would bring upon them for their injustice, v. 6. 9. Which would redound, 1. To the comfort of the saints, v. 10. 2. To the glory of

God, v. 11. Sin appears here both exceeding sinful and exceeding dangerous, and God a just Avenger of wrong, with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician, *Al-taschith, Mitcham of David*.

1. **D**O ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly O ye sons of men? 2. Yea, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; 5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription (*Al-taschith, and Mitcham of David*) with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear, by the title, to have been penned with reference to that persecution through which God preserved him, (*Al-taschith—Destroy not,*) and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, *Michtams, David's jewels*, as Dr. Hammond translates it.

In these verses, David, not as a king, for he was not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet, in God's name arraigns and convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they showed in prosecuting him. Two things he charges them with;

1. The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay, perhaps, a congress or convention of the states, from whom one might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in the laws, had been brought up in the study of these statutes and judgments, which were so righteous, that those of other nations were not to be compared with them. One would not have thought a congregation of such could be bribed and biassed with pensions, and yet, it seems, they were, because the son of Kish could do that for them, which the son of Jesse could not, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. He had vineyards, and fields, and preferences, to give them, and therefore, to please him, they would do any thing, right or wrong. Of all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much as to see, that, in the *place of judgment, wickedness was there*, Eccl. iii. 16. So it was in Saul's time.

1. The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocence; (v. 1.) "*Do ye indeed speak righteousness, or judge uprightly?* No, you are far from it, your own consciences cannot but tell you that you do not discharge the trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are obliged to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well. Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance, which an honest man, and an honest cause, may expect from you? Remember you are sons of men, mortal and dying, and that you stand upon the same level, before God, with the meanest of those you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are *sons of men*, and therefore we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart, *Do ye indeed speak righteousness?* And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done?" Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we say, with this serious question, *Do ye indeed speak*

righteousness? that we may unsay what we have spoken amiss, and may proceed no further in it.

2. They did a great deal of wrong; they used their power for the support of injury and oppression; (*v. 5.*) *In heart you work wickedness.* It intimates that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprise, but with premeditation and design, and with a strong inclination to it, and resolution in it. The more there is of the heart, in any act of wickedness, the worse it is, *Ecc. viii. 11.* And what was their wickedness? It follows, "*You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth,*" (or *in the land,*) "the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of." They did all the violence and injury they could, either to enrich, or avenge, themselves, and they weighed it, that is, (1.) They did it with a great deal of craft and caution; "*You frame it by rule and lines,*" (so the word signifies,) "that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such masters are you of the art of oppression." (2.) They did it under colour of justice. They held the balances (the emblem of justice) in their hands, as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which are practised more effectually from being practised under the pretext of law and right.

II. The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprang; (*v. 3.*) *The wicked, who, in heart, work wickedness, are estranged from the womb, estranged from God and all good, alienated from the divine life, and its principles, powers, and pleasures, Eph. iv. 18.* A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God, and service of him, which we were made for. Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them, they brought it into the world with them, they have in their natures a strong inclination to it, they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education; they are called, and not misnamed, *transgressors from the womb*, one can therefore expect no other than that they will *deal very treacherously*; see *Isa. xlviii. 8.* They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they be born, as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature.

1. Falsehood. They soon learn to speak lies, and *bend their tongues, like their bows*, for that purpose, *Jer. ix. 3.* How soon will little children tell a lie, to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation! No sooner can they speak than they speak to God's dishonour; tongue-sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

2. Malice. Their poison (their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David) was *like the poison of a serpent*, innate, venomous, and very mischievous, and that which they can never be cured of. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such was the cursed enmity in the serpent's brood, against the Lord and his anointed.

3. Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kindness, to mollify them, and bring them to a better temper. *They are like the deaf adder that stops her ear, v. 4, 5.* The psalmist, having compared these wicked men, whom he here complains of, to serpents, for their poisonous malice, takes occasion thence, upon another account, to compare them to the deaf adder or viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, that, whereas by

music, or some other art, they had a way of charming serpents, so as either to destroy them, or, at least, disable them to do mischief, this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground, and stop the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchantment, and so defeated the intention of it, and secured herself. The using of this comparison neither verifies the story, nor, if it were true, justifies the use of this enchantment; for it is only an illusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way. God's design, in his word and providence, is, to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end, how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen, are the charms! How forcible the right words! But all in vain, with most men; and what is the reason? It is, because they will not hearken. None so deaf as those that will not hear; *we have piped unto men, and they have not danced; how should they, when they have stopped their ears?*

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth; break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. 7. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: *when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.* 3. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away; *like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.* 9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. 10. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11. So that a man shall say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

In these verses, we have,

I. David's prayers against his enemies, and all such enemies of God's church and people; for it is as enemies of the latter that he looks upon them, so that he was actuated by a public spirit, in praying against them, and not by any private revenge.

1. He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief; (*v. 6.*) *Break their teeth, O God.* Not so much that they might not feed themselves, as that they might not be able to make prey of others, *iii. 7.* He does not say, "*Break their necks,*" (no, let them live to repent, *slay them not, lest my people forget,*) but, "*Break their teeth,* for they are lions, they are young lions, that live by rapine."

2. That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point; "*When he bends his bow, and takes aim to shoot his arrows at the upright in heart, let them be as cut in pieces, v. 7.* Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark."

3. That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing; that they might *melt away as waters that run continually*, as the waters of a land-flood, which, though they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground, or return to their channels; or, in general, as *water is spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again*, but gradually dries away, and disappears. Such shall the *floods of ungodly men* be, which sometimes *make us afraid*; (*xvii. 4.*) so shall the proud waters be reduced, which threaten to *go over our soul*, *exxiv. 4, 5.* Let us by faith then see what they

shall be, and then we shall not fear what they are. He prays, (v. 8.) that they might 'melt as a snail, which wastes by its own motion, in every stretch it makes leaving some of its moisture behind, which, by degrees, must needs consume it, though it make a path to shine after it. He that, like a snail in her house, is *plenus sui—full of himself*, that pleases himself, and trusts to himself, does but consume himself, and will quickly bring himself to nothing. And he prays, that they might be *like the untimely birth of a woman*, which dies as soon as it begins to live, and never sees the sun. Job, in his passion, wished himself had been such a one, (Job iii. 16.) but he knew not what he said. We may, in faith, pray against the designs of the church's enemies, as the prophet does; (Hos. ix. 14.) *Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them a miscarriage, and dry breasts.* Which explains this here.

II. His prediction of their ruin; (v. 9.) "*Before your pots can feel the heat of a fire of thorns made under them, which they will presently do, for it is a quick fire, and violent while it lasts, so speedily, with such a hasty and violent flame, God shall hurry them away, as terribly and as irresistibly as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury.*" The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain; 1. That the judgments of God often surprise wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to *lie down in sorrow*; (Isa. l. 11.) and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, here they can say, *Alas, I am warm*, Eccl. vii. 6. 2. That there is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty; for *who knows the power of God's anger?* When God will take sinners away dead or alive, they cannot contest with him; *The wicked are driven away in their wickedness.*

Now there are two things which the psalmist promises himself as the good effects of sinners' destruction.

(1.) That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it; (v. 10.) *The righteous shall rejoice, when he sees the vengeance*; the pomp and power, the prosperity and success, of the wicked, are a discouragement to the righteous; they sadden their hearts, and weaken their hands, and are sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, lxxiii. 2, 13. But, when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts, and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God, and his justice and righteousness in governing of the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation, by *seeing their end*, lxxiii. 17. *He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*; there shall be abundance of blood shed; (lxxviii. 23.) and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints, to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners, as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their satisfaction; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, (cxix. 120.) and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause, and will suffer no man to do them wrong, and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints, in the destruction of the wicked, is then a holy joy, and justifiable, when it helps to make them holy, and to purify them from sin.

(2.) That sinners would be convinced and con-

verted by it, v. 11. The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world, will bring men to say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who, before, denied even these plain truths, or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own it, and thank God, who has given them to see it, and see it with satisfaction, That God is, and, That he is (1.) The bountiful Rewarder of his saints and servants; *Verily, (however it be, so it may be read,) there is a fruit to the righteous*; whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser by it, but an unspeakable gainer, in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous, they shall be recompensed in the earth. They shall be taken notice of, honoured, and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned. (2.) That he is the righteous Governor of the world, and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom; verily, however it be, though wicked people prosper and bid defiance to Divine Justice, yet it shall be made to appear, to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God that judges in the earth, though he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposes them according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked, not only in the world to come, but *in the earth*, where they have laid up their treasure, and promised themselves a happiness; *in the earth*, that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes, and they may be taken as earnest of a judgment to come. *He is a God*, (so we read it,) not a weak man, not an angel, not a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of men's fear and fancy, not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined; but a God, a self-existent, perfect, Being; he it is that judges the earth; his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

PSALM LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms; they are all filled with David's complaints of the malice of his enemies, and of their cursed and cruel designs against him; his prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God. The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed; the second of a prophetic spirit, looking forward to Christ and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn into a precedent; the third of grace and a most holy faith, which ought to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, I. He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very bad men, barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, v. 1. 7. II. He foresees and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, v. 8. 17. As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall under these characters, we may, in singing this psalm, read their doom, and foresee their ruin.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

1. **DELIVER** me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. 3. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered

against me; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD. 4. They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: awake to help me, and behold. 5. Thou, therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. 6. They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords *are* in their lips; for who, *say they*, doth hear?

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned; it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story, 1 Sam. xix. 11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder, and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind, so that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy they whose intercourse with heaven is not intercepted or broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state.

In these verses,

I. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated; (v. 1, 2.) "*Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; thou art God, and canst deliver me; my God, under whose protection I have put myself, and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore, in honour and faithfulness, thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. Oh deliver me, and save me!*" He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, (v. 4.) "*Awake to help me, take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief.*" Thus the disciples, in the storm, awoke Christ, saying, *Master, save us, we perish.* And thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

II. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave, not only to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him, and to fill our mouth with arguments; not to move him, but to move ourselves; David does so here.

1. He pleads the bad character of his enemies; they are *workers of iniquity*, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are *bloody men*, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind; "Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness; nor bloody men against a merciful man."

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them; (v. 3.) "Their spite is great, they aim at my soul, my life, my better part; they are subtle and very politic, they lie in wait, taking an opportunity to do me a mischief; they are all mighty, men of honour, and estates, and interest in court and country; they are in a confederacy, they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me; combined

both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them; (v. 4.) *They run and prepare themselves*, with the utmost speed and fury, to do me a mischief." He takes particular notice of the brutish carriage of the messengers that Saul sent to take him; (v. 6.) "*They return at evening from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to their works of darkness, (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame,) and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of the hare.*" Thus did David's enemies, when they came to take him, raise an out-cry against him as a rebel, a traitor, a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to bring a bad reputation upon David, if possible, to set the mob against him, at least, to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs, (xxii. 16.) ran him down with noise, for else they could not have taken him, at least, *not on the feast-day, for there would have been an uproar among the people.* They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts, v. 7. *Swords are in their lips*; reproaches that wound my heart with grief, (xlii. 10.) and slanders that stab my reputation. They were continually suggesting that which drew, and whet, Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers. The sword, perhaps, had not been in Saul's hand, if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God, he was never backward to own himself guilty before him, but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them; (v. 3.) "*Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord, thou knowest, who knowest all things.*" And again, (v. 4.) *without my fault.* Note, (1.) The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless, like doves, yet, for Christ's sake, are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. (2.) Though our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward those that behave themselves ill toward us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. (3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocence, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David, with the contempt of God; *For who (say they) doth hear?* v. 7. Not God himself, x. 11.—xciv. 7. Note, It is not strange, if these regard not what they say, who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

III. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, v. 5. "The Lord, the Judge, be Judge between me and my persecutors!" In this appeal to God, he has an eye to him as *the Lord of hosts*, that has power to execute judgment, having all creatures, even hosts of angels, at his command; he views him also as *the God of Israel*, to whom he was, in a peculiar manner, King and Judge, not doubting that he would appear on the behalf of those that were upright, that were Israelites indeed. When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as *the Lord of all hosts*; when those maligned him, whose spirit were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, he had recourse to God as *the God of Israel.* He desires, that is, he is very sure,

that God will awake to visit all the nations, will make an early and exact inquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men; there will be a day of visitation, (Isa. x. 3.) and to that day David refers himself, with this solemn appeal, *Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors; Selah; Mark that.* 1. If David had been conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not have expected to find mercy; but as to his enemies, he could say he was no transgressor at all; (v. 3, 4.) "*Not for my transgression, and therefore thou wilt appear for me.*" As to God, he could say he was no *wicked* transgressor; for, though he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss. 2. He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors, wilful, malicious, and hardened, in their transgressions, both against God and man, and therefore he sues for justice against them; judgment without mercy. Let not those expect to find mercy, who never showed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

8. But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9. *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.* 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies. 11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O LORD our shield. 12. *For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride; and for cursing and lying which they speak.* 13. Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah. 14. And at evening let them return, *and* let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge, if they be not satisfied. 16. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17. Unto thee, O my strength, I will sing: for God is my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

David here encourages himself, in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God, and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

1. He resolves to wait upon God; (v. 9.) "*Because of his strength,*" (either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength, the hope of which drew him to God,) "*will I wait upon thee,* with a believing dependence upon thee, and confidence in thee." It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our Defence, our High-Place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes,

1. That God will be to him a *God of mercy*; (v. 10.) "*The God of my mercy shall prevent me* with the blessings of his goodness, and the gifts of his mercy; prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations." It is very comfortable to us, in prayer, to eye God, not

only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the Author of all good in us, and the Giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly does the psalmist call God's mercy *his mercy*, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called *the sure mercies of David*; (Isa. lv. 3.) and they are *sure to all the seed*.

2. That he will be to his persecutors a *God of vengeance*. His expectation of this he expresses partly by way of prediction, and partly by way of petition, which come all to one; for his prayer that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so. Here are several things which he foretells concerning his enemies, or observers, that sought occasions against him, and opportunity to do him a mischief; in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire, upon them, v. 10.

(1.) He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous; (v. 8.) "*They think God does not hear them, does not heed them; but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them* for their folly, to think that he who planted the ear, shall not hear, and thou shalt have not them only, but all other such heathenish people that live without God in the world, *in derision.*" Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at, and had in derision. See Ps. ii. Prov. i. 26. Isa. xxxvii. 22.

(2.) That God would make them standing monuments of his justice; (v. 11.) *Slay them not; let them not be killed outright, lest my people forget.* If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be deep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly wear off; swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; for which reason he prays that this might be gradual, "*Scatter them by thy power, and let them carry about with them, in their wanderings, such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country.*" Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a *fugitive and a vagabond*. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners, we must conclude that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. "So scatter them, as that they may never again unite to do mischief, *bring them down, O Lord, our Shield.*" If God has undertaken the protection of his people as their Shield, he will, doubtless, humble and abase all those that fight against them.

(3.) That they might be dealt with according to their deserts; (v. 12.) *For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips;* (for every word they speak has sin in it,) *let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others, and themselves,* (a sin Saul was subject to, 1 Sam. xiv. 28, 44.) and lying. Note, [1.] There is a great deal of malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought of. [2.] Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue; and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the deserts of these, *making his own tongue to fall on him.*

(4.) That God would glorify himself, as Israel's God and King, in their destruction; (v. 13.) "*Consume them in wrath, consume them;* follow them with one judgment after another, till they be utterly ruined, let them be sensibly, but gradually, wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, *That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.*" Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before

them, but they shall be made to know that there is a Higher than they; that there is one who does and will overrule them. The design of God's judgments is to convince men that the Lord reigns, that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures, and disposes all things to his own glory, so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them. He *rules in Jacob*, for there he keeps his court, there he is known, and his name is great; but he *rules to the end of the earth*, for all nations are within the territories of his kingdom. He *rules to the ends of the earth*, even over those that know him not, but he *rules for Jacob*; so it may be read; he has an eye to the good of his church in the government of the world; the administrations of that government, even to the ends of the earth, are *for Jacob his servant's sake, and for Israel's his elect*, Isa. xlv. 4.

(5.) That he would make their sin their punishment; (v. 14.) compare v. 6. Their sin was, hunting for David, to make a prey of him; their punishment should be, that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty, that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it, as they missed of David. Thus they should be, not cut off at once, but scattered, (v. 11.) and gradually consumed; (v. 15.) they that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, Lam. iv. 9. He foretells, that they should be forced to beg their bread from door to door. [1.] That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctance imaginable; *to beg they are ashamed*, (which makes it the greater punishment to them,) and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen; at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, civ. 20. [2.] That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot in the least degree reconcile themselves to; *They shall make a noise like a dog*. When they were in quest of David, they made a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking; now, when they are in quest of meat, they shall make a noise like an hungry dog howling and wailing. Those that repent of their sins, *mourn*, when in trouble, *like doves*; those whose hearts are hardened, make a noise, when in trouble, *like dogs, like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord*. See Hos. vii. 14. *They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled in their beds for corn and wine*. [3.] That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened toward them; so that they should *go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat*, (v. 15.) and should get nothing but by dint of importunity, according to our marginal reading, *If they be not satisfied, they will tarry all night*; so that what people do give them, is not with good-will, but only to be rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them. [4.] That they should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition; *They are greedy dogs which can never have enough*, (Isa. lvi. 11.) and *they grudge if they be not satisfied*. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet does not grudge, does not quarrel with Providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled, and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent, that makes a man unhappy.

II. He expects to praise God; that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, v. 16, 17. Observe,

1. What he would praise God for. (1.) He

would praise his power and his mercy, both should be the subject matter of his song. Power, without mercy, is to be dreaded; mercy, without power, is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power, by which he is able to help us, and his mercy, by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the saints. (2.) He would praise him, because he had, many a time, and all along, found him his Defence, and his Refuge, in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power and mercy in protecting and sheltering them, and may have occasion to praise him. (3.) He would praise him, because he had still a dependence upon him, and a confidence in him, as his Strength to support him and carry him on in his duty, his Defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

2. How he would praise God. (1.) He would *sing*. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of holy joy and thankfulness. (2.) He would *sing aloud*, as one much affected with the glory of God, that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than any thing else. (3.) He would sing aloud *in the morning*, when his spirits were most fresh and lively: God's compassions are new every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises. (4.) He would *sing unto God*, (v. 17.) to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises, and must look up, making melody to the Lord.

PSALM LX.

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress, this comes, which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled in the throne upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites: it was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after. See 2 Sam. viii. 3, 13. 1 Chron. xviii. 3, 12. David, in prosperity, was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm, I. He reflects upon the bad state of the public interests, for many years, in which God had been contending with them, v. 1-3. II. He takes notice of the happy turn lately given to their affairs, v. 4. III. He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, v. 5. IV. He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry them on and complete them, v. 6-12. In singing this psalm, we may have an eye both to the acts of the church, and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.

To the chief musician upon Shushan-eduth, Mich-tam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand.

1. **O** GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. 2. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh. 3. Thou hast showed thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5. That thy beloved may

be delivered, save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

The title gives us an account, 1. Of the general design of the psalm; it is *Michtam—David's jewel*, and it is *to teach*. The Levites must teach it the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God, and to triumph in him; we must in it teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing, we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God, and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys. 2. Of the particular occasion of it: It was at a time, (1.) When he was at war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia, and those of Zobah. (2.) When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites, by his forces under the command of Joab, who had left 12,000 of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns, in this psalm: he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and, in reference to that, he prays; he is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and, in reference to that, he triumphs with a holy confidence in God, that he would complete the victory. We have our cares, at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed. They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and devotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving: the Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore *let not him that rides on the harness, boast as if he had put it off*.

In these verses, which begin the psalm, we have,

I. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments which God had, for some years past, put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbouring nations were vexatious to them. 1. He complains of hard things which they had seen, which they had suffered, (v. 3.) while the Philistines and other ill-disposed neighbours took all advantages against them. God sometimes shows even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only. He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone; "*Thou hast been displeased by us, displeased against us, (v. 1.) and in thy displeasure hast cast us off, and scattered us, hast put us out of thy protection; else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They had never made a prey of us, if thou hadst not broken the staff of bands, (Zech. xi. 14.) by which we were united, and so scattered us.*" Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it. 3. He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a *convulsion*; *Thou hast made the earth to tremble, or the land*. The generality of the people had dreadful apprehension of the issue of these things; the good people themselves were in a consternation; "*Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment*; we were like men intoxicated, and at our wit's end, not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are amazed, can do nothing, nor know we what to do."

Now this is mentioned here, *to teach*, that is, for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favours, it is good to remember our former calamities. (1.) That we may retain

the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be *humbled within us*, Lam. iii. 19, 20. (2.) That God's goodness to us, in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys. (3.) That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

II. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope, that, though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend; (v. 4.) "*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee*, (for, as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern,) *that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise which thou wilt perform, and to be displayed by them, in defence of truth and equity,*" xlv. 4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel; the pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. 1. It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours; they that were scattered, (v. 1.) divided among themselves, and so, weakened and exposed, coalesced in him, when he was fixed upon the throne. 2. It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. 3. It struck a terror upon their enemies; to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the Son of David, is given for an *Ensign of the people*, (Isa. xi. 10.) for a Banner to those that fear God; in him, as the Centre of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage; his love is the banner over them, in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

III. An humble petition for seasonable mercy.

1. That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin; *O turn thyself to us again*; (v. 1.) smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia—A God at peace with us, spreads peace over all the scene*.

2. That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves; "*Heal the breaches of our land*, (v. 2.) not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions." Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a shaken shattered kingdom is set to rights, and saved from ruin.

3. That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies; (v. 5.) "*That thy beloved may be delivered*, and not made a prey of, *save with thy right hand*, with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and *hear me*." They that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart have his hand; *Save them, and hear me*. Note, God's praying people

may take the general deliverances of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, beside the share we have with others in the benefit of them, we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

6. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; 8. Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10. *Will not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?* 11. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope, and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession, as of what they have in prospect; (v. 6.) "*God has spoken in his holiness*; he has given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David; (lxxxix. 35.) therefore *I will rejoice*, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise." Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

I. David here rejoices; and it is in prospect of two things;

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having *spoken in his holiness* that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand; *I will divide Shechem*, a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, and *mete out the valley of Succoth*, as my own; (v. 7.) *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine*, and both entirely reduced. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces, Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be the *strength of his head*, and Judah his *lawgiver*. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ; "*God has spoken in his holiness*, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine;" *All is yours, for you are Christ's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, v. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery; *The Moabites became David's servants*, 2 Sam. viii. 2. Edom shall be taken possession of, as David's own, which was signified by *drawing off his shoe* over it, Ruth iv. 7. As for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to charge their note: rather let those that know their own interest, triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them, to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now, (1.) David is here inquiring for help to carry on the war; "*Who will bring me into the strong city?* What allies, auxiliaries, can I depend upon, to make me master of the enemies' country, and their strong holds?" They that have begun a good work, cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. (2.) He is expecting it from God only; "*Will not thou, O God?* For thou hast *spoken in thine holiness*; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?" He takes notice of the frowns of Providence they had been under, *Thou hadst*, in appearance, *cast us off*, *thou didst not go forth with our armies*; when they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited, the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late, the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past, they hoped in his mercy for what was to come; "*Though thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though *thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou hast begun to show mercy; and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun?" The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet, even then, he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise through him, more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last; *Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello—We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war*. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly*, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

II. He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble*, v. 11. Even in the day of their triumph, they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side. None, therefore, can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters. The *help from trouble* they pray for, is, preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet, (so uncertain are the issues of war,) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might be defeated; therefore, *Lord, send us help from the sanctuary*. *Help from trouble* is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory, *Sic quærimus pacem—Thus we seek for peace*.

The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer, has two things in it. 1. A diffidence of themselves, and all their creature-confidences; *Vain is the help of man*. Then only we are qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. 2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise; (v. 12.) "*Through God we shall do valiantly*, and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of it." Note, (1.) Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken, our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performs all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us.

(2.) Hope in God is the best principle of true courage. Those that do their duty under his conduct, may afford to do it valiantly; for what need they fear who have God on their side? (3.) It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. (4.) Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

PSALM LXI.

David, in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem, David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain: some think by Absalom, because he calls himself *the king*; (v. 6.) but that refers to the King Messiah. David, in this psalm, resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience, and by his expectations. I. He will call upon God, because God had protected him, v. 1.-3. II. He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, v. 4, 5. III. He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, v. 6.-8. So that, in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises; and some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

To the chief musician upon Neginah. A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. 4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses, we may observe,

1. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble; "Whatever comes, *I will cry unto thee*; (v. 2.) not cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This he will do, (1.) Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests; "*From the end of the earth*, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, *will I cry unto thee*." Note, Wherever we are, we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace, *Undique ad celos tantundem est via*—Heaven is equally accessible from all places. "Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee." Note, That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God, the Fountain of all comfort. (2.) Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; "Though my heart is overwhelmed, it is not so sunk, so burthened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down." Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported

and relieved." Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. *Is any afflicted? let him pray.* Jam. v. 13. Ps. cii. title.

2. The particular petition he put up to God, when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink; *Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I*; that is, (1.) "To the Rock which is too high for me to get up to, unless thou help me to it. Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety as I can never attain to but by thy special grace working such a faith in me." (2.) "To the Rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own." God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we. This Rock is Christ; they are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock, unless God by his power lead us; *I will put thee in the cleft of the rock*, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should, therefore, by faith and prayer, put ourselves under the divine conduct, that we may be taken under the divine direction.

3. His desire and expectation of an answer to prayer. He begs in faith; (v. 1.) "*Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer*; let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard, (xx. 6.) and in due time let me have that which I pray for."

4. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he uses to enforce his petition; (v. 3.) "*Thou hast been a Shelter for me*, I have found in thee a Rock higher than I; therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that Rock." Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. "*Thou hast been my strong Tower from the enemy*, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was," Prov. xviii. 10.

5. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, v. 4. (1.) The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all those must make it so who expect to find God their Shelter and strong Tower: none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection; *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance; but he is assured that God, by his providence, would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had, by his grace, wrought in him such a kindness for his tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it *for ever*, because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 8, 9, 24. Those that dwell in God's tabernacle, as it is a house of duty, during their short *ever* on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory, during an endless *ever*. (2.) The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be his constant comfort; *I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings*, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a Shelter to them, ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life; and his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

In these verses, we may observe,

1. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly; (v. 5.) *Thou, O God, hast heard my vows*, that is, (1.) "The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul; thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them, because made in sincerity, and been well pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them;" God put Jacob in mind of his vows, Gen. xxxi. 13.—xxxv. 1. Note, God is a Witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, v. 8. For he that hears the vows we made, will make us hear respecting them, if they be not made good. (2.) "The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard, and answered;" which encouraged him now to pray, *O God, hear my cry*. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me, in vain*, will not now begin to say so. "Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for *thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name*." Note, [1.] There is a peculiar people in the world, that fear God's name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of, and accommodate themselves to, all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. [2.] There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnestness of their future bliss. God himself is their Inheritance, their Portion for ever. The Levites, that had God for their inheritance, must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren; so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. [3.] We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name, we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

2. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life; (v. 6.) *Thou shalt prolong the king's life*. This may be understood, either, (1.) Of himself; if it was penned before he came to the crown, yet, being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could, in faith, call himself *the king*, though now persecuted as an outlaw; or, perhaps, it was penned when Absalom sought to dethrone him, and forced him into exile. There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses, that is, 70 years; which, being spent in serving his generation according to the will of God, (Acts xiii. 36.) might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was, to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, (v. 4.) in a way of duty; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever, in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world that abide before God; that serve him, and walk in his fear; and they that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people, in singing it, to be encouraged with an assurance, that, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, (2.) Of the Messiah, the King of whom he was a type; it was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, that the years of the Lord's Anointed should be as many generations, and that of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end. The Mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives, making in-

tercession; and because he lives, we shall live also.

3. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection; *O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him*. God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it. Not that he would prepare him a strong life-guard, or a well fortified castle; but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; that God's goodness would provide for his safety, according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah; Let him be sent in the fulness of time, in *performance of the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham*, Micah vii. 20. Luke i. 72, 73.

4. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God; (v. 8.) *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever*. Note, God's preservation of us calls upon us to praise him; and *therefore* we should desire to live, that we may praise him; *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*. We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last, as long as our lives are prolonged, we must continue praising God; and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever; *that I may daily perform my vows*. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, (1.) The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform. (2.) Praising God, and paying our vows to him, must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due, because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because, if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

PSALM LXII.

This psalm has nothing in it directly either of prayer or praise, nor does it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, I. David, with a great deal of pleasure, professes his own confidence in God, and dependence upon him, and encourages himself to continue waiting on him, v. 1.—7. II. With a great deal of earnestness, he excites and encourages others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, v. 8.—12. In singing it, we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

1. **T**RULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. 2. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be greatly moved. 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as a tottering fence*. 4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency; they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 5. My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. 6. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be moved. 7. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

In these verses, we have,

I. David's profession of dependence upon God,

and upon him only, for all good; (*v.* 1.) *Truly my soul waiteth upon God.* Nevertheless, (so some,) or, "However it be, whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God frown upon me, and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still my soul waits upon God;" (or *is silent to God*, as the word is;) "says nothing against what he does, but quietly expects what he will do." We are in the way both of duty and comfort when our souls wait upon God; when we cheerfully refer ourselves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom, when we acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to, all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect a doubtful event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, *however it be.* *Is not my soul subject to God?* So the LXX. So it is, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. "My soul has respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation." He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger; and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for *in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains*, Jer. iii. 23. Ps. cxxi. 1, 2. "From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it does come, for his time is the best time." We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called *the salvation of God*, (1. 23.) from him that comes; he prepared it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

II. The ground and reason of this dependence; (*v.* 2.) *He only is my Rock and my Salvation, he is my Defence.* 1. "He has been so many a time; in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he has, by his grace, supported me, and borne me up, under my troubles, and, by his providence, defended me from the insults of my enemies, and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore *I trust he will deliver me*," 2 Cor. i. 10. 2. "He only can be my Rock and my Salvation; creatures are insufficient, they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him." 3. "He has by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the Rock of ages, is my Rock; he that is the God of salvation, is my Salvation; he that is the Most High, is my High Place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him."

III. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. "If God is my Strength and mighty Deliverer, *I shall not be greatly moved*, I shall not be undone and ruined; I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk." Or, "I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair," 2 Cor. iv. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon by him with contempt, *v.* 3, 4. If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though ever so mighty and malicious. He here, (1.) Gives a character of his enemies. *They imagine mischief*, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom, and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtlety, and this against a man, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an equal match for them, for they are many; they continued their malicious prosecution, though Providence had often defeated their mischievous designs. How long will ye do it? will ye

never be convinced of your error? will your malice never have spent itself? They are unanimous in their consultations, to cast an excellent man down from his excellency, to draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin, which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency; to thrust a man, whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character, and blackening that, (which was casting him down from his excellency,) to hinder his preferment. In order to this, they calumniate him, and love to hear such bad characters given of him, and such bad reports raised and spread concerning him, as they themselves know to be false; they delight in lies. And as they make no conscience of lying *concerning* him, to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually; *they bless with their mouth*, they compliment David to his face, but they curse inwardly; in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him, and in their cabals carrying on some evil design or other, by which they hope to ruin him; it is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false; but God is faithful. (2.) He reads their doom, pronounces a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet; *Ye shall be slain, all of you*, by the righteous judgments of God. Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gilboa, according to this prediction; those who seek the ruin of God's chosen, are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand; but they that fight against it, and its patrons and protectors, shall be as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God; (*v.* 5-7.) *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* Note, The good we do, we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have, through grace, experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them, into such a constant dependence upon him, as may make us always easy. He had said, (*v.* 1.) *From him cometh my salvation*; he says, (*v.* 5.) *My expectation is from him*. His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him; "If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleases with me, and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all *turn to my salvation*," Phil. i. 19. He repeats (*v.* 6.) what he had said concerning God, (*v.* 2.) as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly pleased with it, and that dwelt much upon it, in his thoughts: *He only is my Rock and my Salvation, he is my Defence*, I know he is: but there he adds, *I shall not be greatly moved, here, I shall not be moved at all*. Note, The more faith is acted, the more active it is; *Crescit eundo*—It grows by being exercised. The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be *kept in perfect peace*, Isa. xxvi. 3. And as David's faith in God advances to an unshaken stayedness, so his joy in

God improves itself into a holy triumph; (v. 7.) *In God is my salvation and my glory.* Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation, but the glory to be revealed; the eternal weight of glory: And there our glorying must be. In God let us boast all the day long. "The rock of my strength, my strong rock, on which I build my hopes, and stay myself, and my refuge, to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, is in God, and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to; the more I think of it, the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made." Thus does he *delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth,* Isa. lviii. 14.

8. Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. 9. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10. Trust not in oppression, become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. 11. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. 12. Also unto thee, O LORD, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, and wait upon him, as he had done. Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

1. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, v. 8. Observe, 1. To whom he gives this good counsel, *Ye people*, that is, All people; all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth, lxxv. *Ye people of the house of Israel*; (so the Chaldee;) they are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel; and should not a people seek unto their God? 2. What the good counsel is which he gives. (1.) To confide in God; "Trust in him; deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times. We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him; must so trust in him at all times, as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only: and we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when we are in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work. (2.) To converse with God; *Pour out your heart before him*; the expression seems to allude to the pouring-out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1 Sam. vii. 6. But here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is, the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts. 3. What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel: *God is a Refuge for us*; not only my Refuge, (v. 7.) but a Refuge for us all,

even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

II. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing *the heart is deceitful*, Jer. xvii. 5-9. They that trust in God truly, (v. 1.) will trust in him only, v. 5.

1. Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds; (v. 9.) *Surely men of low degree are vanity*, utterly unable to help us, and *men of high degree are a lie*, that will deceive us, if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service; and men of high degree, for their wisdom, power, and influence: but men of neither degree are to be depended on; nay, of the two, men of high degree are mentioned in terms more disparaging; for they are a lie, which denotes not only vanity, but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree, as upon the king and the captain of the host, who, by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so, when they fail us, prove a lie. But, lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or, rather, make trial of them, see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write *Tekel* upon them, they are alike lighter than vanity; there is no depending upon their wisdom to advise us, or their power to act for us, upon their good will to us, nor upon their promises, in comparison with God, or otherwise than in subordination to him.

2. Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city; (v. 10.) *Trust not in oppression*, in riches got by fraud and violence; because, where there is a great deal, it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving; our Saviour calls it the *mammon of unrighteousness*, Luke xvi. 9. "Trust not in the arts of getting riches. Think not, either because you have got abundance, or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others." He that trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness; (lxi. 7.) but, at his end, he will be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sin, much less of supporting themselves in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches, and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately toward them; "Set not your heart upon them; be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not over-solicitous about them, do not value yourselves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end; in short, do not make an idol of it." This we are most in danger of doing when they increase; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, *Take thine ease in these things*, Luke xii. 19. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

III. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our Confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, v. 11, 12. This he himself was well assured of, and would have us be assured of it. *God has spoken once, twice have I heard this*, that is, 1. "God has spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea twice. He has spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely perfect Being, and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it, and I have heard once, yea twice, that is, many a time, by the events that have concerned me in particular.

I have heard it, too, by the light of revelation, by dreams and visions, (Job iv. 15.) by the glorious manifestation of himself upon mount Sinai," (to which, some think, it does especially refer,) "and by the written word." God has often told us what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he has told us. Or, 2. "Though God spake it but once, I heard it twice; heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind." To some God speaks twice, and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare Job xxxiii. 14.

Now, what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard?

(1.) That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. Power belongs to God; he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible. All the powers of all the creatures are derived from him, depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleases. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should trust in him at all times, and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for.

(2.) That he is a God of infinite goodness; here he turns his speech to God himself, as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory; *Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.* God is not only the greatest, but the best, of beings. Mercy is with him, cxxx. 4, 7. He is merciful, in a way peculiar to himself; he is the *Father of mercies*, 2 Cor. i. 3. This is a further reason why we should trust in him, and answers the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness; though we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy, which is over all his works.

(3.) That he never did, nor never will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; *For thou renderest to every man according to his work.* Though he does not always do this, visibly, in this world, yet he will do it in the day of recompense. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him, unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him. If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too powerful to be punished; and if he were not a God of mercy, there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to bespeak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocence; he will be sure to judge according to truth, in righting the injured, and avenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1 Kings viii. 32. Let those, therefore, that are wronged, commit their cause to him, and trust to him to plead it.

PSALM LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion, as any of David's psalms in so little a compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment, was, the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have, I. His desire toward God, v. 1, 2. II. His esteem of God, v. 3, 4. III. His satisfaction in God, v. 5. IV. His secret communion with God, v. 6. V. His joyful dependence upon God, v. 7, 8. VI. His holy triumph in God over his enemies, and in the assurance of his own safety, v. 9. 11. A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally does it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarcely capable of singing it with understanding.

A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1. **O** GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when *David was in the wilderness of Judah*; that is, in the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5. Or, in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 15. 1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful, and less inhabited, than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven; there it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground; *the wilderness there shall blossom as the rose.* 2. The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. 3. None of the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David, in these verses, *stirs up himself to take hold on God,*

I. By a lively active faith; *O God, thou art my God.* Note, In all our addresses to God, we must eye him as God, and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness-state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists, and is present with us, when we say, *O God*, which is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word. And we must own his authority over us, and propriety in us, and our relation to him; *Thou art my God*, mine by creation, and therefore my rightful Owner and Ruler, mine by covenant, and my own consent." We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it; *O God, thou art my God.*

II. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God, and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. Thou art my God, and therefore I will seek thee, for, *should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 19. We must seek him; we must covet his favour as our chief good, and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word, and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him, (1.) *Early*, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him; *Early will I seek thee.* (2.) *Earnestly*; "My soul thirsteth for thee, and my flesh longeth for thee; my whole man is affected with this pursuit, here in a dry and thirsty land." Observe, [1.] His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness, as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a *weary land*, so the word is; it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it, it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly that have their passage through it, it is a valley of Baca, they can promise themselves little from it. [2.] His importunity for

that presence of God; *My soul thirsteth, longeth, for thee.* His want quickened his desires, which were very intense; he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. His desires were almost impatient; he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain, and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God. What is it that he does so passionately wish for? What is his petition, and what is his request? It is this, (v. 2.) *To see thy power, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* That is, (1.) "To see it here in the wilderness, as I have seen it in the tabernacle; to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly." Note, When we want the benefit of public ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements, that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John, in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone, we may have the Father with us, and that is enough. (2.) "To see it again in the sanctuary, as I have formerly seen it there." He longs to be brought out of the wilderness, not that he might see his friends again, and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary; not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see *thy power and glory*, thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections; "that I may increase in my acquaintance with them, and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart." So to *behold the glory of the Lord*, as to be *changed into the same image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. That I may see thy power and glory; he does not say, as I have seen *them*, but as I have seen *thee*. We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him, in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleases himself with the remembrance of; those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God, he loved to think them over again; these he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight, and is the desire, of gracious souls, in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is, to see God, and his power and glory in them.

3. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; 6. When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After two verses that speak his desire in seeking God, here are some that speak his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. *Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord*, (cv. 3.) and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction, we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

1. What David will praise God for; (v. 3.) *Because thy loving-kindness is better than life*, than lives; life, and all the comforts of life; life in its best

estate; long life and prosperity. God's loving-kindness is, in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, xxx. 5. It is better, a thousand times, to die in God's favour, than to live under his wrath. David, in the wilderness, finds, by comfortable experience, that God's loving-kindness is better than life; and *Therefore* (says he) *my lips shall praise thee*. Note, These that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour, ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions, and better possessions, than the wealth of this world can afford us; and that, in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments, and better enjoyments, than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

II. How he will praise God, and how long, v. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe, 1. His manner of blessing God; *"Thus will I bless thee"*; thus, as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away, like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun." Or, "I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee." 2. His continuance and perseverance therein; *I will bless thee while I live*. Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours, and repeat our thanksgivings for them; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks; and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come, of which we say, *We have no pleasure in them*, yet still every day must be a thanksgiving day, even to our dying day. In this work we must spend our time, because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. 3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him; *I will lift up my hands in thy name*. We must have an eye to God's name, to all that by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with, *Hallowed be thy name*, and to conclude with, *Thine is the glory*. This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty, and against our spiritual enemies, in God's name, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, lxxi. 16. Zech. x. 12. We must make all our vows in God's name; to him we must engage ourselves, and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted; *In thee do we boast all the day long*.

III. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, v. 5. 1. With inward complacency; *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*; not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, Isa. xxxv. 6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving-kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul, xxxvi. 8.—lxxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God, they desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcend-

ent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sapless and without relish; as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation. 2. With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God *with joyful lips*. He will praise him, (1.) Openly; his mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believes, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart, (Matth. xv. 8.) but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak, (xlv. 1.) both for the exciting of our own devout affections, and for the edification of others. (2.) Cheerfully; we must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

IV. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired; (v. 6.) I will praise thee, *when I remember thee upon my bed*. We must praise God, upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something toward making up his loss. Observe here,

1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, x. 4. The thoughts of God were ready to him; "*I remember thee*; when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand, present to my mind." This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him; *I meditate on thee*. Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

2. When David employed himself thus; *Upon his bed*, and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but, wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my beds, so some: being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay, two nights together, in the same bed; but, wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground, and with a stone for his pillow, good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business, all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarcely leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore, rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed, (vi. 6.) but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departs from our eyes, through pain or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind, our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease, and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done; see xvi. 7.—xvii. 3.—iv. 4.—cxix. 62. There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God, (cxxxiv. 1.) in which, probably, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites; now that he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

7. Because thou hast been my help: therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 3. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. 9. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10. They shall fall by the sword; they shall be

a portion for foxes. 11. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

David, having expressed his desires toward God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him; (v. 7.) *In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice*; alluding either to the wings of the cherubims, stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell; ("I will rejoice in thine eracles, and in covenant and communion with thee;") or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle's young ones, (Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11.) which speaks the divine power; and the young ones of the common hen, (Matth. xxiii. 37.) which speaks more of divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms, (xvii. 8.—xxxvi. 7.—lvii. 1.—lxi. 4.—xci. 4.) and no where else in this sense, except Ruth ii. 12. where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*. It is our duty to *rejoice in the shadow of God's wings*, which denotes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us, and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil.

Now let us see further,

I. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope, which the word of God was the only foundation of.

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him; "*Because thou hast been my Help*, when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my Helper, but my Help;" for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, *Hitherto the Lord has helped us*, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever drop in our walking with him.

2. The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits; (v. 8.) *My soul follows hard after thee*, which speaks a very earnest desire, and a serious, vigorous, endeavour to keep up communion with God; if we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth toward him as our Prize, Phil. iii. 14. To press hard after God, is to follow him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him fast, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owns, to the glory of God, *Thy right hand upholds me*. God upholds him, (1.) Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under them; *Underneath are the everlasting arms*. (2.) In his devotions; God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God, would soon fail and give off, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God, that is, his right hand, that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that he would, in due time, give him that which he so earnestly de-

sired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires, and kept them up.

II. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, *v. 9, 10*. There were those that *sought his soul to destroy it*; not only his *life*, (which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown, and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness,) but his *soul*, which they sought to destroy by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul, so, doing what they could to starve it; and, by sending him to serve other gods, so, doing what they could to poison it, *1 Sam. xxvi. 19*. But he foresees, and foretells, (1.) That they shall *go into the lower parts of the earth*; to the grave, to hell; their enmity to David would be their death and their damnation; their ruin, their eternal ruin. (2.) That they shall fall by the sword; by the sword of God's wrath and his justice; by the sword of man, *Job xix. 28, 29*. They shall die a violent death, *Rev. xiii. 10*. This was fulfilled in Saul, he fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again; for precepts, not prophecies, are our rule. (3.) That *they shall be a portion for foxes*; either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts, (Saul lay a good while unburied,) or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, *Isa. xxxiv. 14*. Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; *Bring them forth, and slay them before me*, *Luke xix. 27*.

2. That he himself should gain his point at last, (*v. 11*.) that he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed; *The king shall rejoice in God*. (1.) He calls himself *the king*, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself *more than a conqueror*, *Rom. viii. 37*. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. (2.) He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears, he should reap in joy; *The king shall rejoice*. (3.) He resolves to make God the Alpha and Omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming.

Two things would be the good effect of his advancement;

[1.] It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him, that is, to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success; or that swears *by him*, that is, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol; (*Deut. vi. 13*.) and then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name; they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement; *They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me*. They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him*.

[2.] It would be the confutation of his enemies; *The mouth of them that speak lies*, of Saul, and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David, and insulted over him, as if his cause was desperate, shall be quite stopped; they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies, to those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, while their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, *I know*

you not whence you are; they shall be for ever speechless, *Matth. xxii. 12*. The mouths of those also that speak lies against him, that *pervert the right ways of the Lord*, and speak ill of his holy religion, will be stopped, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

PSALM LXIV.

This whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm. 1. He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, *v. 1, 2*. 2. He gives a very bad character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, *v. 3-6*. 3. By the spirit of prophecy, he foretells their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, *v. 7-10*. In singing this psalm, we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken, at last, to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. 2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: 3. Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words; 4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. 5. They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? 6. They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

David, in these verses, puts in before God a representation of his own danger, and of his enemies' character, to enforce his petition that God would protect him, and punish them.

I. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him; (*v. 1, 2*.) *Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer*; grant me the thing I pray for: and this is it, *Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy*, from the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is, in a particular manner, dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and his generation. When his life is struck at, it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace; *Esth. vii. 2, 4*. And if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him, (*Gen. xxxii. 11*.) *Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him*. Preserve my life from fear, not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; this is, in effect, the preservation of the life, for fear has torment; particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are, all their life-time, subject to bondage. He prays, "*Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked*, from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity,

who join forces, as they join counsels, to do me a mischief." Observe, The secret counsel ends in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. "Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection."

II. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies; "Lord, hide me from them, for they are the worst of men, not fit to be connived at; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing; so that I am undone, if thou do not take my part."

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches; *v. 3, 4*. They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly and suddenly shoot at the harmless bird that apprehends not herself in any danger. But, (1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill, the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it *boasts great things*, Jam. iii. 5. It is a dangerous weapon. (2.) Bitter words are their arrows. Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire of hell. For these their malice bends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force. (3.) The upright man is their mark, against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is, the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him. (4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtlety; they shoot in *secret*, that those they shoot at may not discover them, and avoid the danger, for *in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning, or any opportunity to defend himself. *Cursed be he that thus smites his neighbour secretly*, in his reputation, Deut. xxvii. 24. There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue. (5.) Herein they fear not; they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at. Or, rather they fear not the wrath of God, which will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close, and very resolute, in their malicious projects, *v. 5*. (1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and, by joining together in it, they make one another the more bitter and the more bold; *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit—Lay on an abundance of reproach; part will be sure to stick*. It is bad to do a wrong thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it, that is doing the Devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil, and fears no censure. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is baffled, the case is desperate. (2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief, and most effectually; *They commune of laying snares privily*. All their communion is in sin, and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedients to do mischief, every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. (3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices; *they say, Who shall see them?* A practical disbelief of God's

omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution; (*v. 6*.) *They search out iniquity*, they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge, they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of; or, "They are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour; *evil men dig up mischief*. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls, would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for the *inward thought of every one of them*, and the heart, are deep; deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit, and of their will, they show themselves to be, both in subtlety and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7. But God shall shoot at them *with an arrow*; suddenly shall they be wounded. 8. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. 9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God: for they shall wisely consider of his doing. 10. The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

We may observe here,

I. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin. 1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly, to wound him; but God shall shoot at them, for he *ordains his arrows against the persecutors*; (*vii. 13*.) *against the face of them*, xxi. 12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper, than theirs do, or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come; but God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse, which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure, and not apprehensive of any danger. 2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall *make their own tongues to fall upon themselves*. They do it by the desert of their sin, God does it by the justice of his wrath, *v. 8*. When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them, which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls, with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; art snared in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*. They that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession, and then their own tongue falls upon themselves.

II. The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is *done in the open sight of all*, Job xxxiv. 26.

1. Their neighbours shall shun them, and shift for their own safety; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues, and being involved in their ruin, so dreadful will it be, and such a noise will it make in the country; they shall flee away, as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numb. xvi. 27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, v. 9. (1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all; and unless we do so, we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, (Hos. xiv. 9.) *They shall wisely consider his doing.* There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering, (Eccl. vii. 13.) but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. (2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God, upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, cxix. 120. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people; *Smite the scorner, and the simple shall beware.* (3.) They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another, and to all about them, of the justice of God in punishing persecutors; what we wisely consider ourselves, we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God; *This is the finger of God.*

3. Good people shall, in a special manner, take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, v. 10. (1.) It shall increase their joy; *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord,* not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually. (2.) It shall encourage their faith; they shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. (3.) Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting; *All the upright in heart,* that keep a good conscience and approve themselves to God, *shall glory,* not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him; *Let him that glories, glory in the Lord.*

PSALM LXV.

In this psalm, we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appear, I. In the kingdom of grace, (v. 1.) Hearing prayer, (v. 2.) Pardoning sin, (v. 3.) Satisfying the souls of the people, (v. 4.) Protecting and supporting them, v. 5. II. In the kingdom of Providence, fixing the mountains, (v. 6.) Calming the sea, (v. 7.) Preserving the regular succession of day and night, (v. 8.) And making the earth fruitful, v. 9-13. These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore we may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing of it.

To the chief musician. A psalm and song of David.

1. **P**RAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. 2. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. 3. Iniquities prevail against me: *as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* 4. *Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satis-*

fied with the goodness of thy house, *even of thy holy temple.* 5. *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:*

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own, at the throne of grace, but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly, and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

1. How he gives glory to God, v. 1. 1. By humble thankfulness; *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion;* waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness, at its first approach; when God is coming toward us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. Praise waits, with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise waits thine acceptance; the Levites by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed, (cxix. 1, 2.) and thus their praise waited for him; *Praise is silent unto thee,* (so the word is,) as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent admiration at it. As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adornings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searches the heart, and knows what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise, surely he shall be swallowed up, Job xxxvii. 20. *Before thee, praise is reputed as silence,* so the Chaldee; so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people; all his works praise him, they minister matter for praise, but his saints only bless him by actual adoration. The redeemed church sing their new song upon mount Zion, Rev. xiv. 1, 3. In Zion was God's dwelling-place, lxxvi. 2. Happy they who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him. 2. By sincere faithfulness; *Unto thee shall the vow be performed,* the sacrifice shall be offered up, which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow, than to vow, and not to pay.

II. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer; (v. 2.) *Praise waits for thee;* and why is it so ready? (1.) "Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer, thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think, (Eph. iii. 20.) and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith, either in kind or kindness." It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves, if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. (2.) Because, for that reason, we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits: "Therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; justly does every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to

their religion; but when *thy house shall be called a house of prayer to all people*, then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome," Rom. x. 12, 13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this, *who is a God like unto him?* Micah vii. 18. By this he proclaims his name, (Exod. xxxiv. 7.) and therefore, upon this account, praise waits for him, v. 3. "Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that, when they are set in order before us, we are full of confusion, and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us, that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own; so that, when we appear before God, our own consciences accuse us, and we have no replication to make; and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt, of thine own free mercy, and for the sake of a righteousness of thine own providing, purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them." Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin, the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions, and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainments he gives to those that attend upon him, and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away, (v. 3.) and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, v. 4. They that come into communion with God, shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed; not only blessed is the nation, (xxxiii. 12.) but blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, *whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts*; he is a happy man, for he has the surest token of the divine favour, and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here, [1.] What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. *First*, It is to approach him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires toward him; it is to converse with him, as one we love and value. *Secondly*, It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did, that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them, as we do to that which is the business of our dwelling-place. [2.] How we come into communion with God; not recommended by any merit of our own, or brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice; "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and so distinguishest from others who are left to themselves;" and it is by his effectual special grace, pursuant to that choice; whom he chooses he causes to approach; not only invites them, but inclines and enables them, to draw nigh to him. He draws them, John vi. 44.

(2.) They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changes the person, not, *He* shall be satisfied, the man whom thou choosest, but, *We* shall; which teaches us to apply the promises to ourselves, and by an active faith to put our own names into them; *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple*. Note, [1.] God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells, where his ordinances are administered. [2.] God keeps a good house; there is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness, grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price. [3.] In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied; let them have the pleasure of communion with

God, and that suffices them, they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf; (v. 5.) *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation*. This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither does them any wrong, nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See Isa. xlv. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made, for their sakes, among the heathen, and the recompense he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. *By wonderful things*, (so some read it,) things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3. Or by things which strike an awe upon us, thou wilt answer us; the holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his holy places.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, however distressed, and whithersoever dispersed; *he is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth*, of all the saints all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel: for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews; the Confidence of them that are afar off from his holy temple, and its courts, that dwell in the island of the Gentiles; or that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee, when they are at their wit's end. cvii. 27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but afar off upon the sea.

6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; *being girded with power*: 7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. 8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid of thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. 10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. 11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. 12. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature; the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

I. He establishes the earth, and it abides, *exix.* 90. (*v.* 6.) *By his own strength, he setteth fast the mountains;* did set them fast at first, and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes;

— Feriuntque summos
Fulmina montes.

The lightning blasts the loftiest hills.

Hence they are called *everlasting mountains*, Hab. iii. 6. Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firm than they, Isa. liv. 10.

II. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, *v.* 7. The sea, in a storm, makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but, when God pleases, he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm quickly, *cvi.* 29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears that he, whose the sea and the dry land are, is girded with power. And by this, our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he *commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him.* To this instance of the quieting of the sea, he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills the *tumult of the people*, the common people. Nothing is more unruly and disagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify, in secret ways, which they themselves are not aware of. Or, it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, ii. 1. God has many ways to still them, and will for ever silence their tumults.

III. He renews the morning and evening; and their revolution is constant, *v.* 8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered, 1. As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all. They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme Deity, a sovereign Monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be *set for signs*, Gen. i. 14. Many of them, that dwelt in the remote and dark corners of the earth, were so afraid at these tokens, that they were driven to worship them, (Deut. iv. 19.) not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. 2. As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all; *Thou makest the outgoings of the morning*, before the sun rises, and of the evening, before the sun sets, *to rejoice.* As it is God that scatters the light of the morning, and draws the curtains of the evening, so he does both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that, how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them, (Gen. i. 4.) both are equally welcome to the world in their season: it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? so does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people gratefully rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to *sing*, so the word is; for, every morning and every evening, songs of praise were sung by the Levites, it was that which the duty of every day required. We are to look upon our daily worship, alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily occupations, and the most delightful of our daily com-

forts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

IV. He waters the earth, and makes it fruitful; on this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much. The psalm being, probably, penned upon occasion, either of a more than ordinary plentiful harvest, or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper, is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is from above, *omnia desuper—all from above*; we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight, and thither must our praises return; as the first-fruits of the earth were, in the heave-offerings, lifted up towards heaven, by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us.

Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God; which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. (1.) God, that made the earth, hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, *v.* 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises. (2.) God, that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness; though the productions of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and *watered the whole face of the ground*, Gen. ii. 5, 6. Our hearts are dry and barren, unless God himself be as the dew to us, and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water, and make them to increase. (3.) Rain is the river of God, which is full of water; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turns which way soever he pleases. (4.) This river of God enriches the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth, which are produced out of its surface, are abundantly more useful and serviceable to man than those which are hid in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit is derived from it to the earth, and to man upon it.

(1.) To the earth itself; the rain in season gives it a new face; nothing is more reviving, more refreshing, than the *rain upon the new-mown grass*; (lxxii. 6.) even the ridges of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; the furrows of it, which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain, and made fit to receive the seed, (*v.* 10.) they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender, settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the spring of the year is blessed; and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to *crown with his goodness*, (*v.* 11.) to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the comforts of it, as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to *drop fatness*; for whatever fatness there is in the earth, which impregnates its productions, it comes from the outgoings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes, he leaves the tokens of his

mercy behind him, (Joel ii. 13, 14.) and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffusive; (v. 12.) *They dropt upon the pastures of the wilderness*, and not only upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts, which man takes no care of, and receives no profit from, are under the care of the Divine Providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great Benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God doeth good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty, that in them the hills, the little hills, rejoice on every side, even the north-side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as, when he pleases, he can make them tremble, (cxiv. 6.) so, when he pleases, he can make them rejoice.

(2.) To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man, v. 9. *As for the earth, out of it comes bread*, (Job xxviii. 5.) for out of it comes corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it, God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it, as appears by that of our Saviour, (John xii. 24.) and that the constant benefit we have from it, is an instance of that goodness which endures for ever, we shall have reason to think that it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us.

Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, v. 13. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, v. 13. So well stocked are the pastures, that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them, and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle, that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The vallies are so fruitful, that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble vallies is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to *shout for joy, and sing*; because they are serviceable to the honour of God and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise. As there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there were none of the feasts of the Lord, among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the *feast of in-gathering at the end of the year*, Exod. xxiii. 16. Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty, which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God, as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

PSALM LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving-psalm; and it is of such a general use and application, that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, I. For the general instances

of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, v. 1.-7. II. For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, v. 8.-12. And then, III. The psalmist praises God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, v. 13.-20. If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, public and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A song or psalm.

1. **MAKE** a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: 2. Sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious. 3. Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. 4. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah. 5. Come and see the works of God; *he is terrible in his doing* toward the children of men. 6. He turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him. 7. He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes beheld the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

In these verses, the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, *all lands, all the earth*, v. 1.; all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God. 1. This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all, and furnishes every nation with matter for praise. 2. The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. 3. A *prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles* to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. 4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God; he will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth, and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, (1.) To make a joyful noise to God: holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of, (hypocrites are said to *cause their voice to be heard on high*, Isa. lviii. 4.) yet, in praising God, [1.] We must be hearty and zealous, and must do, what we do, with all our might, with all that is within us; [2.] We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master; and both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful joy. (2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name, of all that whereby he has made himself known, v. 2. That which is the honour of God's name, ought to be the matter of our praise. (3.) To make his praise glorious, as far as we can. In praising God, we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God; so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of, to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

He had called upon all lands to praise God, v. 1.; and, v. 4., he foretells that they shall do so; *All the earth shall worship thee*; some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the *everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred*; and this is the purport of it, *Worship him that made heaven and earth*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Being thus

sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel-times God shall be worshipped by singing of psalms; they shall sing to God, that is, *sing to his name*, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon *to come and see the works of God; for his own works praise him*, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better, is, because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works, and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness, in them, (v. 5.) and then speak of them, and speak of them to him, (v. 3.) say unto God, *How terrible art thou in thy works, terrible in thy doings!*

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. *God is terrible*, that is, admirable in his works, through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so bright, so strong, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence he is said to be *fearful in praises*, Exod. xv. 11. In all his doings toward the children of men, he is terrible, and to be eyed with an holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the Divine Providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission; (v. 3.) *Through the greatness of thy power*, before which none can stand, *shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee*, they shall lie unto thee, (so the word is,) they shall be compelled, sore against their wills, to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion; nor can there be much joy of such proselytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, Deut. xxxiii. 29.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, v. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, *he turned the sea into dry land* before them, which encouraged them to follow God's guidance through the wilderness; and when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars, Jordan was divided before them, and they went through that flood on foot; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry, rather than infantry, in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them; (Exod. xv. 14, 15. Josh. v. 1.) but *there did we rejoice in him*; both trust his power, (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him,) and sing his praise, cvi. 12. There did we rejoice; our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world; (v. 7.) *He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations*. (1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. (2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed; *strong is his hand, and high is his right hand*. Hence he infers, *Let not the rebellious exalt themselves*; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, *I will be king*; let

not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves, as if there were any probability that they should gain their point; no, let them be still, for God hath said, *I will be exalted*, and man can not gainsay it.

8. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; 9. Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. 10. For thou, O God, hast proved us: and thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. 11. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou layedst affliction upon our loins. 12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

In these verses, the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own. Let them *make the voice of his praise to be heard*; (v. 8.) for from whom should it be heard, but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants?

Two things we have reason to bless God for.

I. Common protection; (v. 9.) *He holdeth our soul in life*, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; *he puts our soul in life*; so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish, he restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts. *Non est vivere, sed valere vita—It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life*. But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power; *he suffers not our feet to be moved*, preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. *He will keep the feet of his saints*.

II. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger were, v. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to, does not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But, whatever it was, they were surprised with it, as a bird with a snare, inclosed and entangled in it, as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load *upon their loins*, v. 11. But they owned the hand of God in it: we are never in the net, but God brings us into it, never under affliction, but God lays it upon us. Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? *We went through both*, afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, *When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee*, Isa. xliii. 2. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so; *Beware of men*, Matth. x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is

threatening; (cxxxiv. 2, 3, 4.) and that was the case here; "*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, to trample upon us and insult over us; to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over,*" Isa. li. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God, "*Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;*" for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was, in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is, (v. 10.) *Thou, O God, hast proved us, and tried us.* Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them, and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. (1.) That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ, (1 Pet. i. 7.) and perhaps in this world; Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. (2.) That our graces, by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver, when it is refined by the fire, and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, Dan. xi. 35. Rev. ii. 10. Deut. viii. 2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so. For (1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them; "*We went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods.*" Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God, there is a way through them. (2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy; *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place*, into a well-watered place, for the word is, *like the gardens of the Lord*, and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterward may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13. *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows, 14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. 16. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me: 19. But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.*

The psalmist, having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself, and engages himself to do it.

I. In his devotions to his God, v. 13-15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises, and to make a joyful noise with them; but, for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God,

1. By costly sacrifices, which, under the law, were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expense in praising God; but David, for his part, being able, is as willing, in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God; (v. 13.) *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings.* His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen; "*I will go into thy house with them.*" Christ is our Temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind; burnt-sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the altar to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God, who is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a *feast of fat things, full of marrow*; (Isa. xxv. 6.) and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal would he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed. He would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal; and this with the incense of rams, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or, rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

2. By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverance out of trouble, unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution, (v. 13, 14.) *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble.* Note, (1.) It is very common, and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord; to bind ourselves out from sin, and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, it is only a qualification for receiving the tokens of that favour. (2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble, must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not pay.

II. In his declarations to his friends, v. 16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him; "*Come, and hear, all ye that fear God,* for, 1. You will join with me in my praises, and help me in giving thanks." And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God, in returning thanks for the mercies we have received, as in praying for those we want. 2. "You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say; *The humble shall hear of it, and be glad,* (xxxiv. 2.) *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me,* (cxix. 74.) and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people, that will banter it, and make a jest of it," (pearls are not to be cast before swine,) "but to them that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God has done for my soul;" not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other; we should take all occasions to tell

one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others.

Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

(1.) He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty, (v. 17.) *I cried unto him with my mouth*; but if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, *Abba Father*, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention, with thankfulness, to his praise; and the more, if, when we cried to him with our mouth, he was extolled with our tongue, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him then, when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect, though it be not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to unite interests with us, that, in seeking our own welfare, we seek his glory. *His exaltation was under my tongue*, so it may be read; I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths, praises must be in our hearts.

(2.) He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer; (v. 18.) *If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me*. The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words; *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, that is, say they, if I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity does not break out in my words and actions, *God will not hear me*, that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins, in God's account; the falsehood of this our Saviour has shown in his spiritual exposition of the law, Matth. v. But the sense of this place is plain; *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, that is, "If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend, and bid it welcome, make provision for it, and am loath to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart-sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it." Note, Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; *for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*. They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

(3.) He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers; (v. 19.) *"But verily God has heard me"*; though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would have been rejected, yet, to my comfort, I found that God was pleased to regard them." This God did for his soul; by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour, and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes, (v. 20.) *Blessed be God*. The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers*, that is the

proposition; *but verily God has heard me*, that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart;" but, instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God, *Blessed be God*. Whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion; *God has heard me*, and therefore *blessed be God*. Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise. Mercies, in answer to prayer, do, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has *not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy*; lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds by way of correction, "It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it." Therefore God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

PSALM LXVII.

This psalm relates to the church, and is calculated for the public. Here is, I. A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, v. 1. II. A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, v. 2-5. III. A prospect of happy and glorious times, when God shall do this, v. 6, 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy, to foretell the glorious estate of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite into one flock; the beginning of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it of our prayer and hope, in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song.

I. **G**OD be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. 2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. 3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. 5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. 7. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composition of this psalm is such as denotes the penman's affections to have been very warm and lively; by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

I. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, v. 1. Our Saviour, in teaching us to say, *Our Father*, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, *God be merciful to me, and bless me*, but to us, and bless us; for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, 1. That all our happiness comes from God's mercy, and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for, is, *God be merciful to us*, to us sinners, and pardon our sins, (Luke xviii. 13.) to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. 2. That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that; *God bless us*, give us an interest in his promises, and confer

upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us, amounts to his doing well for us. *God bless us*, is a comprehensive prayer; it is pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a by-word. 3. That it is completed in the light of his countenance; *God cause his face to shine upon us*, God by his grace qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us; *To shine with us*; so the margin reads it; *with us* doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

II. He passes from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles; (v. 2.) *That thy way may be known upon earth.* "Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, *that thy way may be known upon earth.*" Thus public-spirited must we be in our prayers, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* We shall have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus, "*God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth*; that, by the peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us, others may be allured to come and join themselves to us, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.*" Zech. viii. 23. These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken, 1. As a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the church, that they desired nothing more than the throwing down of the inclosure, and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews, in the days of Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed, that were of old, desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles, those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did. 2. As a prophecy; that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture-prophecies and promises are wrapt up in prayers, to intimate, that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promises.

Three things are here prayed for, with reference to the Gentiles.

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among them, v. 2. Two things he desires might be known upon earth, even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only. [1.] God's way, the rule of duty; "*Let them all know, as well as we do, what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of them*; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments, which are so much the praise of our nation, and the envy of all its neighbours," Deut. iv. 8. [2.] His saving health, or his salvation; the former is wrapt up in his law, this in his gospel. If God makes known his way to us, and we walk in it, he will show us his saving health, l. 23. They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray, that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where divine revelation is received and embraced; (v. 3.) "*Let the people praise*

thee, O God, let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some, but all the people, praise thee;" all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations. It is again repeated, (v. 5.) as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. They that delight in praising God themselves, cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him; that he may have the honour of it, and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer, [1.] That the gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. *Ortus est sol—The sun is risen.* Acts viii. 8. [2.] That they might be converted and brought into the church, and then they would have a disposition to praise God, the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghill deities they had worshipped, Dan. v. 4. Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they would see him, in the gospel-glass, to be love itself, and the proper object of praise. [3.] That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body, that they might all together praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land, when God is publicly owned, and the ordinances of religious worship are duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to; (v. 4.) *O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy.* Holy joy, joy in God, and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise. That all the people may praise thee, let the nations be glad. They that rejoice in the Lord always, will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wishes to the nations, is, holy joy; for it is joy in God's dominion, joy that God has taken to himself his great power, and has reigned, which the unconverted nations are angry at, Rev. xi. 17, 18. Let them be glad, [1.] That the kingdom is the Lord's, xxii. 28. That he, as an absolute Sovereign, shall govern the nations upon earth. That by the kingdom of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of kingdoms, according to the counsel of his will, though they neither know him nor own him; and that in due time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel, (Matth. xxviii. 19.) and set up the kingdom of his grace among them, upon the ruin of the Devil's kingdom. That he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. [2.] That every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord; "*Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the people righteously, that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and shalt pass an unerring sentence, according to that rule, upon all the children of men; against which there will lie no exception.*" Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judges us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth.

III. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good, when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted, and brought to praise God.

1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that; (v. 6.) *Then shall the earth yield her increase.* Not but that God gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons to the nations, when they sat in darkness; (Acts xiv. 17.) But, when they were converted, the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God; (Joel ii. 14.) and then it was fruitful to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase more than before, to the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a covenant-title to the fruits of it, and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The suc-

cess of the gospel sometimes brings outward mercies along with it; righteousness exalts a nation. See Isa. iv. 2. —lxii. 9.

2. The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that which is much better; *God, even our own God, shall bless us, v. 6.* And again, (*v. 7.*) *God shall bless us.* Note, (1.) There are a people in the world that can, upon good grounds, call God their God. (2.) Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God, and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph; *God, even our own God.* (3.) Those who through grace call God their own, may with an humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he shall bless us with special blessings. (4.) The blessing of God is ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed, when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them; *The ends of the earth shall fear him*, that is, worship him, which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us, call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him, and to be afraid of offending him. When the gospel begins to spread, it shall get ground more and more, till it reach to the ends of the earth. The heaven hid in the meal shall diffuse itself, till the whole be leavened. And the many blessings which *they* will own themselves to have received, that are brought into the church, invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

PSALM LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It does not appear when, or upon what occasion, David penned this psalm; but, probably, it was when, God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obad-edom to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, *Numb. x. 35.* From this he is led, by the Spirit of prophecy, to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

I. He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies, (*v. 1, 2.*) and for his people, *v. 3.* II. He proceeds to praise, which takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God, (*v. 4, 26, 32.*) and suggesting many things as matter for praise. 1. The greatness and goodness of God, *v. 4. . 6.* 2. The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness, (*v. 7, 8.*) settling them in Canaan, (*v. 9, 10.*) giving them victory over their enemies, (*v. 11, 12.*) and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, *v. 13, 14.* 3. The special presence of God in his church, (*v. 15. . 17.*) 4. The ascension of Christ, (*v. 18.*) and the salvation of his people by him, *v. 19, 20.* 5. The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, *v. 21. . 28.* 6. The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it, *v. 29. . 31.* And so he concludes the psalm with an awful acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, *v. 32. . 35.* With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm or song of David.

1. **L**ET God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. 2. As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3. But let the righteous be

glad: let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. 4. Sing unto God, sing praises unto his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. 5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

In these verses,

I. David prays that God would appear in his glory;

1. For the confusion of his enemies; (*v. 1, 2.*) "*Let God arise*, as a Judge to pass sentence upon them, as a General to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him. *Let God arise*, as the sun when he goes forth in his strength; and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it; *Let them melt as wax before the fire*, which is quickly dissolved." Thus does David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it, with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture-prayers. Nay, it looks further to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the Angel of the covenant, that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, (1.) There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God, and hate him; that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men, and against the seed of the woman. (2.) They are the wicked, and none but the wicked, that are enemies to God; the children of the wicked one. (3.) Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him, and all their attempts upon his kingdom. (4.) If God but arise, all his impenitent implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final *perdition of ungodly men*, (2 Pet. iii. 7.) who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 Thess. i. 8.

2. For the comfort and joy of his own people; (*v. 3.*) "*Let the righteous be glad*, that are now in sorrow, *let them rejoice before God*, in his favourable presence. God is the Joy of his people, let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness." Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them, *Light is sown for the righteous*.

II. He praises God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him,

1. As a great God, infinitely great; (*v. 4.*) *He rides upon the heavens, by his name JAH.* He is the Spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manages them, as he that rides in the chariot, sets it a-going; has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people, (Deut. xxxiii. 26.) so

swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition. He rules these by his name *Jah*, or *Jehovah*, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being, the fountain of all beings, power, motion, and perfection; this is his name for ever. When we thus extol God, we must *rejoice before him*; holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy, and tender compassion. He is great, but he despises not any, no not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he uses his power for the relief of those that are distressed, *v. 5, 6*. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He that *rides on the heavens, by his name Jah*, one would think, should immediately have been adored as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the sovereign Director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a *Father to the fatherless*. *Though God be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly*. Happy they that have an interest in such a God as this. He that *rides upon the heavens* is a Father worth having; thrice happy is the people whose God is the Lord. (1.) When families are bereaved of their head, God takes care of them, and is himself their Head; and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a *Father of the fatherless*, to pity them, to bless them, to teach them, to provide for them, and to portion them. He will *preserve them alive*, (Jer. xlix. 11.) and with him they shall *find mercy*, Hos. xiv. 3. They have liberty to call him Father, and to plead their relation to him as their Guardian, cxlvi. 9.—x. 14, 18. He is a Judge or Patron of the widows, to give them counsel, and to do them right; to own them, and plead their cause, Prov. xxii. 23. He has an ear open to all their complaints, and a hand open to all their wants. He is so in his *holy habitation*; which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven, (there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, ix. 4, 7.) or, of the habitation of his grace on earth; and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless, how to apply themselves to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances, there they may find him, and find comfort in him. (2.) When families are to be built up, he is the Founder of them; *God sets the solitary in families*, brings them into comfortable relations that were lonely, gives them a convenient settlement that were unsettled; (cxiii. 9.) *he makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad*, (so Dr. Hammond,) putting them that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God. (1.) In relieving the oppressed; he *brings out those that are bound with chains*, and sets them at liberty, who were unjustly imprisoned, and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. (2.) In reckoning with the oppressors; *The rebellious dwell in a dry land*, and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. Israel were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march

through the wilderness; Selah: 8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even Sinai itself was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. 10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. 11. The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it. 12. Kings of armies did flee apace; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. 13. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.

The psalmist here, having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten,

I. That God himself was the Guide of Israel through the wilderness; when he had brought them out of their chains, he did not leave them in the dry land, but himself went before them, in a *march through the wilderness*, *v. 7*. It was not a journey but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived; God's Israel having him for their Leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and bring them out of it. Cant. viii. 5.

II. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai, *v. 8*. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice, as Israel did, Deut. iv. 32, 33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them; so expounded, so enforced. Then the *earth shook*, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied, no doubt, with thunder-showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine *dropt as the rain*, Deut. xxxii. 2. *Sinai itself*, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, *was moved at the presence of God*; see Judg. v. 4, 5. Deut. xxxiii. 2. Hab. iii. 3. This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself, could remove them, could get over them.

III. That he provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan; (*v. 9, 10*.) *Thou didst send a plentiful rain, and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor*. This may refer, 1. To the victualling of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails, (lxxxviii. 24, 27.) and it might be fitly called a *rain* of liberality or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel, (here called *God's inheritance*, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself,) *when it was weary*, and ready to perish; this confirmed their faith, and was

a proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, 2. To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land *flowing with milk and honey*, which is said to *drink water of the rain of heaven*, Deut. xi. 11. When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein, God, in judgment, remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough, even to satisfy their poor with bread. This looks further to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the plentiful rain, with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, Isa. xlv. 8. Christ himself is the Rain; (lxxii. 6.) *He shall come as showers that water the earth.*

IV. That he often gave them victory over their enemies; armies, and kings of armies, appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but, first or last, they gained their point against them, v. 11, 12, 14. Observe here, 1. That God was their Commander in chief; *The Lord gave the word*, as General of their armies; he raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success; *God spoke in his holiness*, and then *Gilead is mine*. 2. That they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word, (*the word of the Lord came unto them*;) and then *great was the company of the preachers*, prophets and *prophetesses*; for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send, he will not want messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women's joining in the triumph, when the victory was obtained, as was usual, (Exod. xv. 20. 1 Sam. xviii. 7.) in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. 3. That their enemies were defeated, and put to confusion; *Kings of armies did flee*, did flee with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable, did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke; they fled apace, fled and never rallied again. 4. That they were enriched with the plunder of the field; *She that tarried at home divided the spoil*. Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the stuff, who were, by a statute of distributions, to share the prey, (1 Sam. xxx. 24.) but even the women that tarried at home had a share; which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken. 5. That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them, and contributed to their reformation; (v. 14.) *When the Almighty scattered kings for her*, for the church, *she was white as snow in Salmon*, purified and refined by the mercies of God; *when the host went forth against the enemy, they kept themselves from every wicked thing*, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel, by the victory, was confirmed in their purity and piety. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer, for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people. This victory was first notified by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples, (Matth. xxviii. 7.) and by them it was preached to all the world; while believers that tarry at home, that did not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

V. That, from a low and despised condition, they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and after-

ward, when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour, and sometimes by another, they did, as it were, *lie among the pots* or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure—they were black, and dirty, and discoloured. But God, at length, *delivered them from the pots*; (lxxxi. 6.) and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, *like the wings of a dove covered with silver*, v. 13. "And so, says Dr. Hammond, under Christ's kingdom, the heathen idolaters, that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should, from that detestable condition, be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all Christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state, and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15. The hill of God *is as the hill of Bashan*; a high hill, *as the hill of Bashan*. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in*; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever. 17. The chariots of God *are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels*: the LORD *is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place*. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. 19. Blessed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. 20. *He that is our God is the God of salvation*; and unto God the LORD *belong* the issues from death. 21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, (v. 8.) here comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner; compare ix. 11. *Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion*, for which reason Zion is called the *hill of God*.

I. He compares it with the hill of Bashan, and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, v. 15, 16. It is true, Zion was but little and low, in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet, upon this account, it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is *the hill of God*, the hill which he desires to dwell in, and where he chooses to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, cxxxii. 13, 14. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God, than to be high and great in the world. "Why leap ye, ye high hills? Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore, though you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, yet, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it." Zion was especially honourable, because it was a type of the gospel-church, which is therefore called mount Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and this is intimated here, when he said, *The Lord will dwell in it for ever*, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no

city comparable to that which is incorporated by the gospel-charter, for there God dwells, and will dwell for ever.

II. He compares it with mount Sinai, of which he had spoken, (v. 8.) and shows that it has the Shechinah or divine presence in it, as really, though not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, v. 17. Angels are the *chariots of God*, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies; his chariots of conveyance, which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah, and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels; his chariots of state, in the midst of which he shows his glory and power. They are vastly numerous; *twenty thousands*, even thousands multiplied. There is an *innumerable company of angels* in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xii. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots; (2 Sam. viii. 4.) but what were they, for number or strength, to the chariots of God? While David had them on his side, he needed not to fear those that trusted in *chariots and horses*, xx. 7. God appeared on mount Sinai, attended with myriads of angels, by whose dispensation the law was given, Acts vii. 53. *He comes with ten thousands of saints*, Deut. xxxiii. 2. And still in Zion God manifests his glory, and is really present, with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read the last words of the verse, *Sinai is in the sanctuary*; the sanctuary was to Israel instead of mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command; when the First Begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge, *Let all the angels of God worship him*; (Heb. i. 6.) they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, *angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament, that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of Christians, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Let the woman have a veil on her head, *because of the angels*; and see Eph. iii. 10.

III. The glory of mount Zion was, the King whom God set on that holy hill, (ii. 6.) who came to the daughter of Zion, Matth. xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it it is expressly applied, (Eph. iv. 8.) *Thou hast ascended on high*; (v. 18.) compare xlvii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it. It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For, 1. He then triumphed over the gates of hell; he led *captivity captive*; he led his captives in triumph; as great conquerors used to do, *making a show of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. He led those captive who had led us captives, and who, if he had not interposed, would have held us captive for ever. Nay, he led *captivity itself captive*, having quite broken the power of sin and Satan. As he was the Death of death so he was the Captivity of captivity, Hos. xiii. 14. This speaks the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies; it was such, that through him *we also are more than conquerors*, that is, triumphers, Rom. viii. 37. 2. He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers; *Thou hast received gifts for men*; he gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph. iv. 8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life, he bestows it upon as many as were given him, John xvii. 2. *Thou hast received gifts for men*, not for angels; fallen angels were not

to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel ministers, Heb. ii. 5. Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will may reap the benefit of these gifts. The apostle tells us what these gifts were, (Eph. iv. 11.) *prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*, the institution of a gospel-ministry, and the qualification of men for it; both which are to be valued as the gifts of Heaven, and the fruits of Christ's ascension. Thou hast received gifts in man; so the margin; that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a *merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God*. In him, as Mediator, *all fulness dwells*, that from his *fulness we might receive*. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes, (1.) The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the *rebellious also*, for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state; perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, Col. i. 21. For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, that their enmity might be slain, and that they might return to their allegiance. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say, in our law, amounts to the reversing of an attainer. Christ came to a rebellious world not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. (2.) The favour designed us in them; *He received gifts for the rebellious*, that the Lord God might dwell among them; that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old in the sanctuary; that he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the *tabernacle of God among men*, that he might dwell with them, and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, Ezek. xxxvii. 27.

IV. The glory of Zion's King, is, that he is a Saviour and Benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming Fire to all these that persist in rebellion against him, v. 19-21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that, (Mark xvi. 16.) *He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned*.

1. They that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. If in sincerity we avouch God to be our God, and seek to him as such, (1.) He will continually do us good, and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us, (v. 18.) fitly does he subjoin, in the next words, *Blessed be the Lord*, for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits. So many, so weighty, are the gifts of God's bounty to us, that he may be truly said to *load us* with them; he *pours out blessings* till there be no room to receive them, Mal. iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unwearied is he in doing us good, that he *daily* loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. (2.) He will, at length, be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the *salvation of God*, which he will show to them that order their conversation aright, (1. 23.) the salvation of the soul. He that *daily loads us with benefits* will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation;

and what he gives us now, he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. *He is our God*, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us, for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But has he power to complete this salvation? Yes, certainly, *for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death*. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. i. 18. He, having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them when they die, and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; *for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*. And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed, and come from God as the God of their salvation. See 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. They that persist in their enmity to him, will certainly be ruined, (v. 21.) *God shall wound the head of his enemies*, of Satan the old serpent, of whom it was by the first promise foretold, that *the Seed of the woman should break his head*, Gen. iii. 15. He shall destroy all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men, ex. 6. *He shall wound the heads over many countries*; of all those, whoever they are, that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be *brought forth and slain before him*, Luke xix. 27. He will *wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses*. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head *the hairy scalp*, perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his halter. Or it denotes either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, who let their hair grow, to make themselves look the more frightful; or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, who are nice about their hair: neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which Divine Justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

22. The LORD said, I will bring again from Bashan; I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea: 23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine enemies*, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24. They have seen thy goings, O God; *even the goings of my God, my King*, in the sanctuary. 25. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. 26. Bless ye God in the congregations, *even the LORD* from the fountain of Israel. 27. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. 28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 29. Because of the temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the

multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

In these verses, we have three things.

I. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies; (v. 22, 23.) *The Lord said*, in his own gracious purpose and promise, "I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation," v. 20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised, 1. That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly: I will *again bring them from the depths of the sea*, as he did Israel, when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness; and I will *again bring them from Bashan*, as he did Israel, when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og, and whence their next remove was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will *set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people*; (Isa. xi. 11.) and we may perhaps see repeated *all the wonders which our fathers told us of*. But this is not all; 2. That he will make them victorious over their enemies; (v. 23.) *That thy feet may be dipped, as thou passest along, in the blood of thine enemies*, shed like water in great abundance, and the *tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same*. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and, in the destruction of the anti-christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bridles, Rev. xiv. 20. The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of, but as types of Christ's victory over death and the grave, for himself and for all believers, in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

II. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Has he spoken in his holiness? Has he said he will *bring again from Bashan*? What then is required of us in return to this?

1. That we observe his motions; (v. 24.) "*They have seen, thy people have seen, thy goings, O God*"; while others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, they have seen *the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary*." See here, (1.) How an active faith appropriates God; he is God and King; but that is not all, he is *my God* and *my King*. Those who thus take him for theirs, may see him, in all his outgoings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. (2.) Where God's most remarkable outgoings are; even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people, in the gospel-church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. These outgoings of his in the sanctuary far outshine the outgoings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead. (3.) What is our duty in reference to these outgo-

ings, which is to observe them, *This is the finger of God; surely God is with us of a truth.*

2. That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see *his goings in his sanctuary,*

(1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, *v. 25.* It was asserted that the Levites, some of whom were singers, and others players on instruments, who had the nearest views of his *outgoings in his sanctuary,* should lead in his praises. And, it being a day of extraordinary triumph, *among them were damsels playing with timbrels,* to complete the concert. "Thus, (says Dr. Hammond,) when Christ is gone up to heaven, the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world, and even the women that were witnesses of it shall affectionately join with them in divulging it."

(2.) Let all the people of Israel, in their solemn religious assembly, give glory to God; *Bless ye God,* not only in temples, but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets; or wherever there is a congregation of those that *come forth from the fountain of Israel,* that are of the seed of Jacob, let them concur in blessing God. Public mercies, which we jointly share in, call for public thanksgivings, which all should join in. "Thus (says Dr. Hammond) all Christians shall be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and to that end, frequently to assemble together in congregation." And,

(3.) Let those among them who, upon any account, are the most eminent, and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, *v. 27.* There was *little Benjamin,* (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time,) *with their rulers, the princes of Judah,* (that was the royal tribe in David's time,) and *their council,* their captains or leaders. In the beginning of David's reign, there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy. But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps, because those tribes, lying toward the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and other neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them. Dr. Hammond gives another reason, That these were the two learned tribes, *Naphtali giveth goodly words,* (Gen. xlix. 21.) and Zebulun had those that *handle the pen of the writer,* Judg. v. 14. These shall join in praising God, their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God, when these that are above others in dignity, power, and reputation, go before them in the worship of God, and are forward in using their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him. Dr. Hammond notes hence, that the kingdom of the Messiah should, at length, be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

3. That we seek unto him, and depend upon him, for the perfecting of what he has begun, *v. 28.* In the former part of the verse, the psalmist speaks to Israel, "*Thy God has commanded thy strength;* whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded. Thou hast no reason to fear, while thou hast strength of God's commanding; and no reason to boast, while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding." In the latter part, he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences; "*Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.* Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, perform what thou hast promised, and bring to an happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun." What God has wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace, he will give more grace.

Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls *God,* as he had done, xlv. 6, 8. "*Thy God*" (God the Father) "*has commanded thy strength,* has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, (lxxx. 17.) has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray, that thou, *O God the Son,* wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, wilt accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us."

III. The powerful invitation and inducement which would thereby be given to those that are without, to come in and join themselves to the church, *v. 29-31.* This was in part fulfilled by the accession of many proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making of them fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the seed of Israel, Eph. iii. 6.

1. Some shall submit for fear; (*v. 30.*) "*The company of spearmen,* that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people," (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ, and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world,) "Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought, at length, to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms." Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver, when he returned them with this confession, *I have betrayed innocent blood.* And see Rev. iii. 9. Many, by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit, notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it; *Scatter thou the people that delight in war,* who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ, that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God, that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he does not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of humanity, as well as Christianity, that can delight in war, and take a pleasure in contention; let them expect that, sooner or later, they shall have enough of it, Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xiii. 10.

2. Others shall submit willingly; (*v. 29, 31.*) *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem,* (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared,) *kings shall bring presents unto thee,* rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring. Even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, shall court the favour of Christ, at a great expense. There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God, in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He mentions *Egypt* and *Ethiopia,* two countries out of which

subjects and supplicants were least to be expected; (v. 31.) *Princes shall come out of Egypt*, as ambassadors to seek God's favour, and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for *the Lord of Hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people*, Isa. xix. 25. Even Ethiopia, that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel, (2 Chron. xiv. 9.) should now *stretch out her hands unto God*, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him, and that soon; *Agree with thine adversary quickly*. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ, and be owned by him.

32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the LORD; Selah: 33. To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens *which were* of old: lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice. 34. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds. 35. O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed be God.

The psalmist, having prayed for, and prophesied of, the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise; (v. 32.) *Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord*; they all ought to do it, and when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper Object of praise, upon several accounts.

1. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion; *He rides upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old*; (v. 33.) compare v. 4. He has, from the beginning, nay, from before all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven; guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies; and, from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, dispenses the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

2. Because of his awful and terrible majesty; *He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice*; which may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called *the voice of the Lord*, and is said to be *powerful and full of majesty*, (xxix. 3, 4.) or in particular to that thunder in which God spake to Israel at mount Sinai.

3. Because of his mighty power; *Ascribe ye strength unto God*; (v. 34.) acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power, that it is folly to contend with him, and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects, and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. *Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore, Thine is the glory*. We must acknowledge his power, (1.) In the kingdom of grace. *His excellency is over Israel*; he shows his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people. (2.) In the kingdom of providence: *His strength is in the clouds*, whence comes the thunder of his power, the *small rain, and the great rain of his strength*. Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

4. Because of the glory of his sanctuary, and the wonders wrought there; (v. 35.) *O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places*. God is to be admired

and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places, which speaks aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he does, and will, show himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

5. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people; *The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people*, which the gods of the nations, that were vanity and a lie, could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them, when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God; they owned they had *no might of their own*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore he must have the glory of all we do, (cxv. 1.) and our humble thanks for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, *Blessed be God*. If all be *from him*, let all be *to him*.

PSALM LXIX.

David penned this psalm, when he was in affliction; and in it, I. He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in, and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour him, v. 1.-21. II. He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, v. 22.-29. III. He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succour him, and would do well for the church, v. 30.-36. Now, in this, David was a type of Christ, and divers passages in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament, and are said to have their accomplishment in him, v. 4, 9, 21; and v. 22. refers to the enemies of Christ. So that (like the 22d psalm) it begins with the humiliation, and ends with the exaltation, of Christ, one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. In singing this psalm, we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed; not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them; for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors, and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim. A psalm of David.

1. **S**AVE me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away. 5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face. 8. I am become a stran-

ger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9. For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. 10. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb unto them. 12. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.

In these verses, David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

I. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burthen that lay very heavy upon him.

1. He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit; (v. 1, 2.) "*The waters of affliction, those bitter waters, are come unto my soul; not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares, and my heart with oppressive grief; so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to do.*" We shall bear up under our troubles, if we can but keep them from our hearts; but when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;* but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded? That was David's case here. His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing; he sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing; the considerations that used to support and encourage him, now failed him, or were out of the way, and he was ready to give himself up for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that overflowed him, overwhelmed him. He was like a sinking drowning man, in such confusion and consternation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in, when he said, *Now is my soul troubled;* and *My soul is exceeding sorrowful;* for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent, nor sink into despair.

2. He complains of the long continuance of his troubles; (v. 3.) *I am weary of my crying.* Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in his view, the more life was in his prayers; yet he had not immediately an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying, which God's people used to have; so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried, that he could cry no more. Nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping, and expecting relief, *Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God;* he had almost looked his eyes out, in expectation of deliverance. Yet his pleading this with God, is an indication that he is resolved not to give up believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; his eyes fail, but his faith does not. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Yet, at the same time, he kept hold of his relation to him, *My God, my God.*

3. He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, v. 4. They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he

given them, that they were so spiteful toward him? None at all; "*They hate me without cause; I never did them the least injury, that they should bear me such ill-will.*" Our Saviour applies this to himself, (John xv. 25.) *They hated me without a cause.* We are apt to use this, in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will right us; "*They are mine enemies wrongfully, for I have been no enemy to them.*" In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong, and then we may the better bear it, if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable, both for their number, *They are more than the hairs of mine head,* (Christ's enemies were numerous, they that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were they increased that troubled him!) and for their strength, *They are mighty,* in authority and power. We are weak, but our enemies are strong; *for we wrestle against principalities and powers.* Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, (1.) It was what his enemies compelled him to; they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of. (2.) It was what he consented to, that, if possible, he might pacify them, and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring, and the latter commonly thought to forbid, the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation. Yet the case may be such sometimes, that it may become our duty. Blessed Paul, though free from all men, yet, for the honour of Christ, and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But, applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood; *Then he restored that which he took not away;* he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence. God's glory, in some instances of it, was taken away by the sin of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness, were taken away; it was not he that took them away, and yet by the merit of his death he restored them.

4. He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an ingenuous mind cuts as deep as any other; (v. 8.) *"I am become a stranger to my brethren; they make themselves strange to me, and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me, and ashamed to own me."* This was fulfilled in Christ, whose *brethren did not believe on him,* (John vii. 5.) who *came to his own, and his own received him not,* (John i. 11.) and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

5. He complains of the contempt that was put upon him, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this, especially, his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace, and made himself of no reputation; we having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate Deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him: (1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, v. 10, 11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vain glory, they are justly laughed at for it; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sack-

cloth, and, from his abasing himself, they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God, it is just that it turn to their dishonour; but when David, purely in devotion to God, and to testify his respect to him, wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment, as humble penitents used to do; instead of commending his devotion, and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it, and to prevent others from following his good example, for that was his reproach; they laughed at him, as a fool, for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill-spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works, (John x. 32.) and, when he cried, *Eli, Eli, My God, my God*, was bantered, as if he called for Elias. (2.) The persons that reproached him, v. 12. [1.] Even the gravest, and the most honourable, from whom better was expected; *They that sit in the gate speak against me*, and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators, and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly. [2.] The meanest, and the most despicable, the abjects, (xxxv. 15.) the scum of the country, the *children of fools*, yea, the *children of base men*; (Job xxx. 8.) and he was the song of the drunkards, they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the bad consequences of the sin of drunkenness; it makes men *despisers of those that are good*, 2 Tim. iii. 3. When the king was made sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorn, Hos. vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful. See what is commonly the lot of the best of men; they that are the praise of the wise, are the song of fools: but it is easy to those that rightly judge of things, to despise being thus despised.

II. His confessions of sin are very serious; (v. 5.) “O God, thou knowest my foolishness, both what is, and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me.” Note, Even then when, as to men’s unjust accusations, we plead *Not guilty*, yet, before God, we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that therefore it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is naked and open before God. 1. He knows the corruption of our nature; *Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart*. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. 2. He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hid from him, no not our heart-sins, no not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back, till they are repented of and pardoned. This may be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it hid from him, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.

III. His supplications are very earnest. 1. For himself; (v. 1.) “*Save me, O God, save me from sinking, from despairing*.” Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, Heb. v. 7. 2. For his friends; (v. 6.) *Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, and that seek thee, O God of Israel*, (under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the *God of hosts*, who has all power to help, and as the *God of Israel* in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged

in honour and truth to help,) let not them *be ashamed and confounded for my sake*. This intimates his fear, that, if God did not appear for him, it would be a discouragement to all other good people, and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them; it intimates too his earnest desire, that, whatever became of him, all that seek God, and wait upon him, might be kept in heart, and in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves, nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God, and wait for him, had been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

IV. His plea is very powerful, v. 7, 9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burthens; “Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for, 1. It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee; *For thy sake I have borne reproach*.” Those that are evil spoken of for well-doing, may with an humble confidence leave it to God to bring forth their righteousness as the light. 2. “It is with thee that I am reproached; *The zeal of thine house has eaten me up*, has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house, for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. That is it that has made them ready to eat me up, and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them.” They that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David, for believing in his word, and walking in his ways. Or it may be considered as an instance of David’s zeal for God’s house, that he resented all the indignities done to God’s name, as if they had been done to his own name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God, and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ; (1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father, that *the zeal of his house did even eat him up*, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which reminded his disciples of this text, John ii. 17. (2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself, that *the reproaches of them that reproached God fell upon him*, (Rom. xv. 3.) and therein he set us an example.

13. But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me: in the truth of thy salvation. 14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16. Hear me, O LORD; for thy loving-kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. 18. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me, because of mine enemies. 19. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries

are all before thee. 20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him; *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee.* They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but, notwithstanding that, he resolves to continue praying. Note, Though we may be jeered for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it. Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing of his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word, rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. "They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny; but I use other methods, whatever they do, *As for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord.*" And it was in an acceptable time; not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction. God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people make them so much the more the objects of his pity: it is seasonable for him to help them, when all other helps fail, and they are undone, and feel that they are, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, (Isa. xlix. 8.) *In an acceptable time have I heard thee.* Now observe,

I. What his requests are. 1. That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. *Hear me;* (v. 13.) and again, *Hear me, O Lord;* (v. 16.) *Hear me speedily;* (v. 17.) not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that *the Father heard him always*, John xi. 42. 2. That he might be rescued out of his troubles; might be saved from sinking under the load of grief; (*Deliver me out of the mire;* let me not stick in it, (so some,) but help me out, and *set my feet on a rock*, xl. 2.) might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him; "*Let me be delivered from them that hate me*, as a lamb from the paw of the lion, v. 14. Though I am come into deep waters, (v. 2.) where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented, and silenced; let not the water-flood, though it flow upon me, overflow me, v. 15. Let me not fall into the gulf of despair, let not that deep swallow me up, let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone." He gave himself for lost, in the beginning of the psalm, yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. 3. That God would turn to him, (v. 16.) that he would smile upon him, and not hide his face from him, v. 17. The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, are enough to keep our spirits from sinking in deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, v. 18. "Draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it."

II. What his pleas are, to enforce these petitions.

1. He pleads God's mercy and truth; (v. 13.) *In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.* There is a mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. The truth also of his

salvation, the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him, is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God; "*Hear me, for thy loving-kindness is good;* it is so in itself, it is rich, and plentiful, and abundant, it is so in the account of all the saints, it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all; Oh, let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," v. 16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God; in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so, under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for *he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy*, exlvii. 11.

2. He pleads his own distress and affliction; "*Hide not thy face from me, for I am in trouble,* (v. 17.) and therefore need thy favour; therefore it will come seasonably; and therefore I shall know how to value it." He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, and the indignities that were done him; (v. 19.) *Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour.* See what a stress is laid upon this: for, in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach, and shame, and dishonour, he underwent; which God took notice of, and accepted, as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, who therefore must by repentance take shame to ourselves, and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour, for his sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it, and as he is before-hand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature, when he says, (v. 20.) *Reproach has broken my heart, I am full of heaviness;* for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name, to be oppressed with a bad one; but, when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and what a favour to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, (as they deemed it, Acts v. 41.) we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies; (v. 18.) *Deliver me because of mine enemies,* because they were such as he had before described them; (v. 4.) " *Mine adversaries are all before thee,* (v. 19.) thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me." One instance of their barbarity is given, (v. 21.) *They gave me gall for my meat,* (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood,) *and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say *It is finished*, till this was fulfilled; and, in order that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it, he said, *I thirst*, John xix. 28, 29. Some think that the hyssop which they put to his mouth, with vinegar, was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God; and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends, and his disappointment in them; (v. 20.) *I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;* they all failed him, like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings all his disciples forsook

him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men, miserable comforters are they all; nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort and consolation.

22. Let their table become a snare before them; and *that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.* 23. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. 26. For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27. Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29. But *I am* poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The two first verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle, (Rom. xi. 9, 10.) and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion; one great objection against it, at first, was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God so remarkably set it aside by the utter destruction of the temple, and the sinking of those, with the Mosaic economy, that obstinately adhered to it, in opposition to the gospel of Christ.

Let us observe here,

I. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ: not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death, and yet repented, and found mercy, (Acts ii. 23.—iii. 14, 15.) but upon those of them and their successors, who justified it by an obstinate infidelity, and rejection of his gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers. See 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. It is here foretold,

1. That their sacrifices and offerings should be mischief and prejudice to them; (v. 22.) *Let their table become a snare.* The altar of the Lord, which is called *his table and theirs*, because, in feasting upon the sacrifices, they were partakers of the altar: this should have been for their welfare or peace, for they were peace-offerings, but it became a snare and a trap to them, for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity, and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that Altar which they had no right to eat of who continued to serve the tabernacle, Heb. xiii. 10.

Or, it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and delights of

sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, Jude 12.

2. That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge, or of that peace, which believers are blessed with in the gospel of Christ, v. 23. That they should be given up, (1.) To a judicial blindness; *Let their eyes be darkened*, that they see not the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin was, that they *would* not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they *should* not see, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts, which were hardening, and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 Cor. iv. 4. This was foretold concerning them, (Isa. vi. 10.) and Christ ratified it, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. John xii. 40. (2.) To a judicial terror. There is a gracious terror, which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul, (Acts ix. 6.) he trembled and was astonished; but this is a terror that shall never end in peace, but shall make their loins continually to shake, through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion. This was fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews, when the *Romans* came upon them.

3. That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation; (v. 24.) *Pour out thine indignation upon them.* Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them, may justly fear that his indignation will be poured out upon them; for they that submit not to the Son of his love, will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ, that the *wrath of God abideth on them*, (John iii. 36.) it takes hold of them, and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. Behold the goodness and severity of God!

4. That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ; John xi. 48. (v. 25.) *Let their habitation be desolate*, which was fulfilled when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and *Zion, for their sakes, was ploughed as a field*, Mic. iii. 12. The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of, but this was *left unto them desolate*, Matth. xxiii. 38. Yet that is not all, it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged; but is here added, *Let none dwell in their tents*, which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem, for, after the destruction of the Jews, it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose. But this is applied particularly to Judas, by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. For he being *felo de se*—a suicide, we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that *his habitation was desolate, and no man of his own kindred dwelt therein.*

5. That their way to ruin should be down-hill, and nothing should stop them, nor interpose to prevent it; (v. 27.) "Lord, leave them to themselves, to add iniquity to iniquity." Those that are bad, if they be given up to their own hearts' lusts, will certainly be worse; they will add sin to sin, nay, they will *add rebellion to their sin*, Job xxxiv. 37. It is said of the Jews, that they *filled up their sin always*, 1 Thess. ii. 16. *Add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity*, so some read it, for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connexion. If men will sin, God will reckon for it. But those that have multiplied to sin, may yet find mercy, for

God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore, that they might be precluded from all hopes of mercy, he adds, *Let them not come into thy righteousness*, to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, Phil. iii. 9. Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course, and they will never come into this government; for, being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. And those that are so proud and self-willed, that they will not come into God's righteousness, shall have their doom accordingly; themselves have decided it, they shall not come into his righteousness. Let them not expect any benefit by it, that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

6. That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness; (v. 28.) *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*; let them not be suffered to live any longer, who, the longer they live, the more mischief they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them; the nation, as a nation, was blotted out, and became not a people. Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant, and all the privileges of it; that is the *book of the living*; "Let the commonwealth of Israel itself, Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise, which hitherto it has had the monopoly of. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, but reprobate silver let men call them, because the Lord has rejected them. Let them not be written with the righteous; let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints, when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven," i. 5.

II. What the sin is, for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them; (v. 26.) *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounded*. 1. Christ was he whom God had smitten, for he pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, and therefore men hid their faces from him, Isa. liii. 3, 4, 10. They persecuted him with a rage reaching up to heaven, they cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Compare that of St. Peter with this; (Acts ii. 23.) though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, *He trusted in God, let him deliver him*, than which nothing could be said more grieving. 2. The suffering saints were God's wounded, wounded in his cause, and for his sake, and them they persecuted, and talked to their grief. For these things wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. and see Matth. xxiii. 34, &c. This may be understood more generally, and it teaches us that nothing is more provoking to God than to insult over those whom he has smitten, and to add affliction to the afflicted, upon which it justly follows here, *Add iniquity to iniquity*; see Zech. i. 15. Those that are of a wounded spirit, under trouble and fear about their spiritual state, ought to be very tenderly dealt with, and care must be taken not to talk to their grief, and not to make the heart of the righteous sad.

III. What the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all; (v. 29.) "*But I am poor and sorrowful*, that is the worst of my case, under outward afflictions, yet written among the righteous, and not

under God's indignation as they are." It is better to be poor and sorrowful, with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial, and under his curse. For they who come into God's righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, Isa. lxi. 10. This may be applied to Christ. He was, in his humiliation, poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, and that had not where to lay his head; but God highly exalted him, the salvation wrought for him, the salvation wrought by him, *set him up on high, far above all principalities and powers*.

30. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31. *This* also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32. The humble shall see *this*, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33. For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein: 35. For God will save Sion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it; and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ, and as an example to Christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise, which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him; (v. 30, 31.) "*I will praise the name of God*, not only with my heart, but with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving;" for he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimated that all Christians ought to glorify God with their praises, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And this shall please the Lord, through Christ, the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers, better than the most valuable of the legal sacrifices, (v. 31.) *an ox or bullock*. This is a plain intimation, that, in the days of the Messiah, an end should be put, not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment, which were instituted by the ceremonial law; instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted; the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb. xiii. 15. It is a great comfort to us, that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are, or ever were.

2. He encourages other good people to rejoice in God, and continue seeking him; (v. 32, 33.) *The humble shall see this, and be glad*. They shall observe, to their comfort, (1.) The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor, when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for; how far he is from despising his prisoners, though men despise them; he favours them with his gracious visits, and will find a time to enlarge them. *The humble shall see this, and be glad*, not only because, when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it, but because it is an encouragement to them, in their straits and difficulties, to trust in God. It shall revive the hearts of these who seek God, to see more seals and subscriptions to this truth, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, *Seek ye me, in vain*. (2.) The exaltation of the Saviour, for of

him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he enters into the joy that was set before him, when he is heard, and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave, the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and they that seek God through Christ, shall live and be comforted; concluding, that, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

3. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God; the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, *v. 34.* Heaven and earth, and the hosts of both, were made by him, and therefore *let heaven and earth praise him.* Angels in heaven, and saints on earth, may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the fishes of the sea, though mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for the sea is his, and he made it.

The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, *v. 35, 36.* For God will save Zion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns; for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the gospel-church, in which let all that wish well to it, rejoice. For, (1.) It shall be peopled and inhabited. There shall be added to it such as shall be saved. The cities of Judah shall be built, particular churches shall be formed and incorporated according to the gospel-model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there, and to have it in possession, to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it, and to pay the tribute and services required from it. They that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the Christian religion, and take their place in the Christian church; they shall dwell therein, as citizens, and of the household of God. (2.) It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be *res unius ætatis*—a *transitory thing*; no, the *seed of his servants shall inherit it*, God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him, and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers; for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old, *I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.* The land of promise shall never be lost for want of heirs, for God *can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*, and will do it rather than the entail shall be cut off. David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed. And since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all gathered in, the world would be at an end quickly, it is just that, for this assurance of the preservation of it, heaven and earth should praise him.

PSALM LXX.

This psalm is adapted to a state of affliction; it is copied almost word for word from the 40th, and, some think, for that reason, is entitled, *a psalm to bring to remembrance*; for it may be of use sometimes to pray over the prayers we have formerly made to God, upon like occasions, which may be done with new affections. David here prays that God would send, I. Help to himself, *v. 1, 5.* II. Shame to his enemies, *v. 2, 3.* III. Joy to his friends, *v. 4.* These five verses were the five last verses of Ps. xl. He seems to have intended this short prayer to be, both for himself and us, a *salve* for every sore, and therefore to be always in mind; in singing, we may apply it to our particular troubles, whatever they are.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1. **MAKE** haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha! 4. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5. But I *am* poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou *art* my help and my deliverer, O LORD; make no tarrying.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance, to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promises; for so we are said to do, when we pray to him, and plead with him; (*Isa. xliii. 26.*) *Put me in remembrance.* Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles, and of former devotions, that, when the clouds return after the rain, we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the words we have often used before; our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here uses the words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to show that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

1. David here prays that God would make haste to relieve and succour him; (*v. 1, 5.*) *I am poor and needy*, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity are very good pleas in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despises not the sighing of a contrite heart, and has pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit; who fills the hungry with good things. He prays, (1.) That God would appear for him to deliver him from his troubles in due time. (2.) That in the mean time he would come in to him, to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. (3.) That he would do this quickly; *Make haste*, (*v. 1.*) and again, (*v. 5.*) *Make haste, make no tarrying.* Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. *He that believes does not make haste*, so as to anticipate or outrun the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape, or to take any unlawful methods of relief; but he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer, that he would hasten the desired succour. *"Make haste unto me*, for the longing desire of my soul is toward thee; I shall perish, if I be not speedily helped; I have no other to expect relief from; *thou art my Help and my Deliverer.* Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee; I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient, to be so; therefore make haste to me."

2. He prays that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, *v. 2, 3.* Observe, (1.) How he describes them; they sought after his soul, his life, to destroy that; his mind, to disturb that; to draw him from God to sin, and to despair; they desired his hurt, his ruin; when any calamity befell him, or threatened him, they said, *"Aha, aha, so would we have it*, we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined." Thus spiteful, thus insolent, were they. (2.) What his prayer is against them; *"Let them be ashamed*; let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame, as that they may

seek thy name; (lxxxiii. 16.) let them see their fault and folly, in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be *ashamed of their envy*, Isa. xxvi. 11. However, let their designs against me be frustrated, and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, *much cast down in their own eyes*," Neh. vi. 16.

3. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy; (v. 4.) that all those who seek God, and love his salvation, who desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but he may put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we, if we answer the character. (1.) Let us make the service of God our great business, and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him, and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care, and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all, rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it, and title to it. (2.) Let us then be assured, that, if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds, and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early, and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him is as an evidence of his good will to them, and an earnest of their finding him, cv. 3. There is joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion, That God is the *Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him*. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure, (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, will be our continual feast,) *Let God be magnified*, as he will be, to eternity, in the salvation of his people. All who wish well to the comfort of the saints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty *amen* to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, *Let God be magnified*.

PSALM LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it; which makes many think it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion; for that was the great trouble of his latter days. It might be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life, of which it was foretold, that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over-particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their afflictions, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm, above any other, is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. I. He begins the psalm with believing prayers; with prayers that God would deliver and save him, (v. 2, 4.) and not cast him off, (v. 9.) or be far from him, (v. 12.) and that his enemies might be put to shame, v. 13. He pleads his confidence in God; (v. 1, 3, 5, 7.) the experience he had had of help from God; (v. 6.) and the malice of his enemies against him, v. 10, 11. II. He concludes the psalm with believing praises, v. 14, &c. Never was his hope more established, v. 16, 18, 20, 21. Never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged, v. 15, 19, 22. 24. He is in an ecstasy of joyful praise; in the singing of it, we too should have our faith in God encouraged, and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort:

thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou *art* my rock and my fortress. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5. For thou *art* my hope, O Lord God: *thou art* my trust from my youth. 6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* continually of thee. 7. I am as a wonder unto many: but thou *art* my strong refuge. 8. Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and with* thine honour all the day. 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him: for *there is none* to deliver him. 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13. Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Two things, in general, David here prays for; That he might not be confounded, and, That his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

1. He prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. With this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never dash the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here,

1. How David professes his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God, and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him, by telling him, (if it be indeed true,) what an entire confidence we have in him; (v. 1.) "*In thee, O Lord, and in thee only, do I put my trust*. Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my Help. They that are entirely satisfied with God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and, in dependence upon that, as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture, for him, may truly say, *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust*. Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. *Thou art my Rock and my Fortress*, (v. 3.) and again, "*Thou art my Refuge, my strong Refuge*; (v. 7.) I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me. *Thou art my Hope and my Trust*; (v. 5.) thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy word as the proper Object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it vain to do so."

2. How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences; (v. 5, 6.) "*Thou hast been my Trust from my youth*; ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left, I stayed myself upon thee, and saw a great deal of reason to do so; for *by thee have I been holden up from the womb*." Ever since he had the use of his reason, he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had a being, he had been a monument of it. Note, The consi-

deration of the gracious care which the Divine Providence took of us in our birth and infancy, should engage us to an early piety, and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our Help from our birth, ought to be our Hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we are capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable. This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly; but that he had betimes made him one of his family; "Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant; thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thine handmaid, and born in thine house, cxvi. 16. And therefore," (1.) "I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto, wilt not let me fall now; thou that madest me, wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands; thou that helpedst me, when I could not help myself, wilt not abandon me now that I am as helpless as I was then." (2.) "Therefore I have reason to resolve that I will devote myself unto thee; *My praise shall therefore be continually of thee*; I will make it my business every day to praise thee, and will take all occasions to do it."

3. What his requests to God are, in this confidence.

(1.) That he might *never be put to confusion*, (v. 1.) that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected, and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith, that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that makes not ashamed.

(2.) That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies; (v. 2.) "*Deliver me in thy righteousness*; as thou art the righteous Judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured, and punishing the injurious, cause me some way or other to escape." (God will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.) "*Incline thine ear unto my prayers*, and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, v. 4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of those that are ready to pull me in pieces." Three things he pleads for deliverance; [1.] The encouragement God had given him to expect it; *Thou hast given commandment to save me*; (v. 3.) thou hast promised to do it; and such efficacy is there in God's promises, that they are often spoken of as commands; like that, *Let there be light, and there was light*. He speaks, and it is done. [2.] The character of his enemies; they are wicked, unrighteous, cruel, men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them, (v. 4.) for he is a holy, just, and good, God. [3.] The many eyes that were upon him; (v. 7.) "*I am as a wonder unto many*; every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I am fallen into, and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God." Or, "I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my Refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not."

(3.) That he might always find rest and safety in God; (v. 3.) *Be thou my strong Habitation*; be thou to me a *Rock of repose, whereto I may continually resort*. They that are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him, and confidence in him, that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever toward him, may promise themselves a strong Habitation in him, such as never will fall of itself, nor can ever be broken through

by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

(4.) That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work; (v. 8.) "*Let my mouth be filled with thy praise*, as now it is with my complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence." They that love God, love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day; not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only *seven times a day*, (cxix. 164.) but *all the day*, to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live, they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

(5.) That he might not be neglected now in his declining years; (v. 9.) *Cast me not off now in the time of my old age, forsake me not when my strength fails*. Observe here, [1.] The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age; *My strength fails*; where there was strength of body, and vigour of mind, strong sight, a strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is, is *labour and sorrow*, xc. 10. [2.] The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities; *Lord, cast me not off, do not then forsake me*. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone, if God should abandon him; to be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the Strength of our heart. But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a Master that is not wont to cast off old servants. In this confidence, David here prays again, (v. 12.) "*O God, be not far from me*, let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawals, for then I am miserable; *O my God, a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help*, lest I perish before help come."

II. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, 1. What it was which they unjustly said against him, v. 10, 11. Their plot was deep and desperate, it was against his life; *They lay wait for my soul*, (v. 10.) and are adversaries to that, v. 13. Their powers and policies were combined, they take counsel together, and very inselent they were in their conduct; they say, *God has forsaken him, persecute and take him*. Here their premises are utterly false, that because a good man was in great trouble, and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, therefore God had forsaken him, and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God, who think so themselves, or whom others think to be so. And as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is *talking to the grief of one whom God hath smitten*, lxix. 26. But thus they endeavoured to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah, by suggesting that God was his Enemy, and fought against him; *Am I now come up without the Lord against this city, to destroy it?* Isa. xxxvi. 10. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him, ill becomes these who are conscious to themselves that they deserve to be forever forsaken of God. But *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall, I shall rise*. He

that seems to forsake for a small moment, will gather with everlasting kindness. 2. What it was which he justly prayed for, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion; (*v.* 13.) Let them be *confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul*. If they will not be confounded by repentance, and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so ruined. God will turn into shame the glory of those who turn into shame the glory of God and his people.

14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers *thereof*. 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only. 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation, and thy power to every one *that* is to come. 19. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee? 20. *Thou*, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22. I will also praise thee with the psalter, *even* thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together, (*v.* 14.) where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice, his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings, "Let mine enemies say what they will, to drive me to despair, *I will hope continually*, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day; I will live upon hope, and will hope to the end." Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us; and then we shall praise him yet more and more. "The more they reproach me, the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet." The longer we live, the more expert we should grow in praising God, and the more we should abound in it. *I will add over and above all thy praise*, all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little. When we have said all we can, to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe, in these verses,

I. How his heart is established in faith and hope; and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe,

1. What he hopes in, *v.* 16. (1.) In the power of

God: "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God*, not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to, and exert myself in, my work and warfare; will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength; disclaiming my own sufficiency, and depending on him only as all-sufficient; in the strength of his providence, and in the strength of his grace." We must always go about God's work, in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do. (2.) In the promise of God; "*I will make mention of thy righteousness*, thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy." We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the *righteousness of God by faith*, and which is *witnessed by the law and the prophets*; we must depend upon God's strength for assistance, and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24.

2. What he hopes for.

(1.) He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same to him to the end, that he had been all along, *v.* 17, 18. Observe here, [1.] What God had done for him when he was young; *Thou hast taught me from my youth*. The good education and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young, he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood to know the holy scriptures, and it is what we have reason to bless God for. [2.] What he had done for God when he was middle-aged; *He had declared all God's wondrous works*. These that have got good when they are young, must be doing good when they are grown up, and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own that all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works, admiring he should do so much for us who are so undeserving, and we must make it our business to declare them, to the glory of God, and the good of others. [3.] What he desired of God now that he was old; *Now that I am old and gray-headed*, dying to this world, and hastening to another, *O God, forsake me not*. This is what he earnestly desires and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure that he will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. [4.] What he designed to do for God in his old age; "*I will not only show thy strength, by my own experience of it, to this generation, but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so show it to every one that is to come*." As long as we live, we should be endeavouring to glorify God and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them, should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, pleasure, and advantage, of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

(2.) He hopes that God would revive him, and raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition; (*v.* 20.) *Thou who hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles*, above most men, *shalt quicken me again*. Note, [1.] The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world. [2.] God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the

saints, and that will help to extenuate them, and make them seem light. He does not say, "Thou hast *burthened* me with those troubles," but "*showed* them me;" as the tender father shows the child the rod to keep him in awe. [3.] Though God's people be brought ever so low, he can revive them, and raise them up. Are they dead? He can quicken them again. See 2 Cor. i. 9. Are they buried, as dead men out of mind? He can bring them *up again from the depths of the earth*, can cheer the most drooping spirit, and raise the most sinking interest. [4.] If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves, in due time, a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles, though great and sore, shall be no hinderance to our joyful resurrection from the depths of the earth; witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference; his Father showed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

(3.) He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever; (v. 21.) "Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest, after this shock, than before; thou shalt not only *comfort me*, but *comfort me on every side*, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side." Note, Sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he makes them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

(4.) He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, v. 24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly; *They are confounded, they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt*. His honour would be their disgrace, and his comfort their vexation.

II. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises; how he rejoices in hope, and sings in hope, for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of, and others might have the comfortable knowledge of; (v. 15.) *My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation*; and again, (v. 24.) *My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, and this, all the day*. God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal: the rectitude of his nature; the equity of his providential disposals; the righteous laws he has given us to be ruled by; the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon; and the everlasting righteousness which his Son has brought in for our justification. God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together; let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, l. 23. If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day, for they are subjects that can never be drawn dry.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration; as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth, of it; "*I know not the numbers thereof*;" (v. 15.) Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me, they are so many, so

great; (if *I would count them, they are more in number than the sand*, xl. 5.) yet, knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter," v. 19. The righteousness that is in God is very high; that which is done by him for his people is very great: put both together, and we shall say, *O God, who is like unto thee?* This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be, (1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great; so high, that we cannot apprehend them; so great that we cannot comprehend them. (2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his; *O God, who is like unto thee?* None in heaven, none on earth, no angel, no king. God is a non-such; we do not rightly praise him, if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exultation, v. 22, 23. Observe, (1.) How he would eye God in praising him. [1.] As a faithful God; *I will praise thee, even thy truth*. God is made known by his word; if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. [2.] As a God in covenant with him; "*O my God, whom I have consented to, and avouched for mine*." As in our prayers, so in our praises, we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him. [3.] As the Holy One of Israel; Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people, and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour, that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour, that he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) Observe how he will express his joy and exultation; [1.] With his hand, in sacred music, with the psalter, with the harp; at these David excelled, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. [2.] With his lips, in sacred songs; "*Unto thee will I sing*, to thine honour, and with a desire to be accepted of thee. *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee*, knowing they cannot be better employed." [3.] In both, with his heart; "*My soul shall rejoice, which thou hast redeemed*." Note, *First*, Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. *Secondly*, We do not make melody to the Lord, in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name, else all about us is worth little. *Thirdly*, Redeemed souls ought to be joyful, thankful souls. The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

PSALM LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and it should seem, so was this too; for Solomon was now standing fair for the crown; that was his prayer for himself, this for his son and successor, and, with these two, the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended, as we find in the close of this psalm. If we have but God's presence with us while we live, and good hopes concerning those that shall come after us, that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven, it is enough. This is entitled a psalm for Solomon: it is probable that David dictated it, or, rather, that it was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by divine direction, he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 Kings i. 30, &c. But, though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of, under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the divine oracle was, that *of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his*

throne, Acts ii. 30. To him he here bare witness, and with the prospect of the glories of his kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments, when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good, as he wished. David, in spirit, I. Begins with a short prayer for his successor, v. 1. II. He passes immediately into a long prediction of the glories of his reign, v. 2.-17. And, III. He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, v. 18.-20. In singing this psalm, we must have an eye to Christ, praising him as a King, and pleasing ourselves with our happiness as his subjects.

A psalm for Solomon.

1. **G**IVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

1. We may apply it to Solomon; *Give him thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness*; make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king. (1.) It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children, is, that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty; that is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David, that his own son was to be his successor; but more so, that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education, (Prov. iv. 3.) had taught him *good judgment and righteousness*, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may, by prayer, bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain, for their prayer shall either be answered, or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom. (2.) It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. (3.) It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem, David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they, in singing, might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives, must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

2. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him. But, (1.) It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church's King, King on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the King of kings had said, *Thou art my Son*, ii. 6, 7. "Hasten his coming, to whom all judgment is committed;" and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall *judge the world in righteousness*. (2.) It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father; "Let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our Righteousness; let him be the great Trustee of divine grace for all that are his; give it him, that he may give it us."

2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. 3. The mountains shall bring peace to the

people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 4. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. 5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. 6. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. 10. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. 12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. 13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. 14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. 15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. 16. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ, under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in, 1. As a plea to enforce the prayer; "Lord, give him thy judgments, and thy righteousness, and then he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and so shall answer the end of his elevation, v. 2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people, committed to his charge, will have the benefit of it." *Because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice*, 2 Chron. ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. 2. As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah, is plain, because there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace, at first, in the administration of his government; but, before the end of his reign, there were both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full ac-

complishment only in the kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

I. That it should be a *righteous government*; (v. 2.) *He shall judge thy people with righteousness.* Compare Isa. xi. 4. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity; the chancery it erects, to relieve against the rigours of a broken law, is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness; (v. 3.) for then only is the peace like a river, when the *righteousness is as the waves of the sea.* The world will be judged in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31.

II. That it should be a peaceable government; *The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills;* (v. 3.) that is, (says Dr. Hammond,) both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be *abundance of peace*, v. 7. Solomon's name signifies *peaceable*, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is, in a special manner, the glory of Christ's kingdom, for, as far as it prevails, it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our Peace.

III. That the poor and needy should be, in a particular manner, taken under the protection of this government; *He shall judge thy poor*, v. 2. Those are God's poor, that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case, and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure so to judge, as to save, v. 4. This is insisted upon again, (v. 12, 13.) intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also, both because they have no helper, and it is for his honour to help them; and because they cry unto him, and he has promised, in answer to their prayers, to help them; they by prayer *commit themselves unto him*, x. 14. He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them, he will save their souls, and that is all they desire; *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Christ is the poor man's King.

IV. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with; *He shall break them in pieces*; (v. 4.) shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done. This is the office of a good king, *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbis*—*To spare the vanquish'd, and debase the proud.* The Devil is the great oppressor, whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; *with the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one*, (Isa. xi. 4.) and shall deliver the souls of his people from *deceit and violence*, v. 14. He shall save from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them, and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. So *precious shall their blood be unto him*, that not a drop of it shall be shed by the deceit or violence of Satan or his instruments, without being reckoned for. Christ is a King, who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with, but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' iniquity.

V. That religion shall flourish under Christ's go-

vernment; (v. 5.) *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure.* Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God was well kept up, for some time, under his government, but it did not last long; this, therefore, must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to, and kept in, the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, *Fear God, and give honour to him*, Rev. xiv. 7. And as Christ's government promotes devotion toward God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men; (v. 7.) *In his days shall the righteous flourish*; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound, and be in reputation, shall command, and be in power. The law of Christ, written in the heart, disposes men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposes men to live in love; and so it produces abundance of peace, and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall *fear God as long as the sun and moon endure*; Christianity, in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having, in the power of it, got footing in the heart, it will continue there till, by death, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, that is, the bodily senses, are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

VI. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving subjects; (v. 6.) *He shall, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass*; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, though it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, Isa. lv. 10. Let our hearts *drink in the rain*, Heb. vi. 7.

VII. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering, 1. The extent of his territories; (v. 8.) *He shall have dominion from sea to sea, from the South sea to the North, or from the Red sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river Euphrates, or Nile, to the ends of the earth.* Solomon's dominion was very large, (1 Kings iv. 21.) according to the promise, Gen. xv. 18. But no sea, no river, is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, bespeak the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations, (Matth. xxiv. 14.) and the *kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms*, (Rev. xi. 15.) when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries, (1.) That were strangers to him; *They that dwell in the wilderness*, cut of all high roads, that seldom hear news, shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer, and redemption by him, *shall bow before him*, shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break, we are ruined, if we bow, we are certainly made for ever. (2.) That were enemies to him, and had fought against him; *They shall lick the dust*, they shall be brought down, and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten, that

they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat, (Gen. iii. 15.) for of his seed they are; and over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low? 2. The dignity of his tributaries; He shall not only reign over them that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over them that dwell in the palaces, (v. 10.) *The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, that lie most remote from Israel, and are the isles of the Gentiles*, (Gen. x. 5.) these shall bring presents to him as their Sovereign Lord, by and under whom they hold their crowns, and all their crown-lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom. This was literally fulfilled in Solomon; for *all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present*; (2 Chron. ix. 23, 24.) and in Christ too, when the wise men of the East, who, probably, were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him, and *brought him presents*, Matth. ii. 11. They shall present themselves to him; that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, Rom. xii. 1. *They shall offer gifts*, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their Altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called *the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles*, Rom. xv. 16. And so is their devotion to God, Heb. xiii. 15, 16. *Yea, all kings shall, sooner or later, fall down before him*, either to do their duty to him, or to receive their doom from him, v. 11. They shall fall before him, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; as supplicants for his mercy, or expectants of his judgment. And when the kings submit, the people come in of course; *All nations shall serve him*, all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation *incense shall be offered to him, and a pure offering*, Mal. i. 11. Rev. vii. 9.

VIII. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects, (v. 15.) *He shall live*; his subjects shall desire his life, *O king, live for ever*, and with good reason; for he has said, *Because I live, you shall live also*; and of him it is witnessed, *that he liveth, ever liveth, making intercession*, Heb. vii. 8, 25. He shall live, and live prosperously; and, 1. Presents shall be made to him. Though he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts, nor the services of any; yet to him *shall be given of the gold of Sheba*; gold, the best of metals, gold of Sheba, which, probably, was the finest gold; for he that is best must be served with the best. They that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, must serve him with it, do good with it; *Honour the Lord with thy substance*. 2. Prayers shall be made for him, and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings and all in authority; not in compliment to them, as it is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them. But the Old Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him *He that should come*. And, now that he is come, we must pray for the success of his gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him; *Hosanna to the Son of David*, prosperity to his reign; and we pray for his second coming. It may be read, *Prayer shall be made through him, or for his sake*; whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name, and in dependence upon his intercession. 3. Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums

given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness; *Daily shall he be praised*. By praying daily in his name, we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the government that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all Christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

IX. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country, and of the people inhabiting the cities, v. 16. 1. The country shall grow rich; sow but *a handful of corn on the top of the mountains*, whence one would expect but little, and yet *the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon*, it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains, the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty; (Gen. xli. 47.) as the grass upon the house-top is said to be that wherewith the mower fills not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful productions of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah. A handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered into Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon. The fields were *white to the harvest*, John iv. 35. Matth. ix. 37. The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. 2. The towns shall grow populous; *They of the city shall flourish like grass*, for number, for verdure. The gospel-church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are, shall be happy in it.

X. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour, and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be *feared throughout all generations*, (v. 5.) and *as long as the sun and moon endure*, v. 7. 1. The honour of the prince is immortal, and shall never be sullied; (v. 17.) *His name shall endure for ever*, in despite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it, and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved, it shall be perpetuated, it shall be propagated. As the names of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ is in himself; *Filiabitur nomen ejus—His name shall descend to posterity*; all nations, while the world stands, shall call him blessed; shall bless God for him, continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. 2. The happiness of the people is universal too, it is complete, and everlasting; men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed, in him. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers, that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3.

18. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen. 20. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom, may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

1. The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings

for the prophecy and promise, *v. 18, 19.* So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he has said, though it be not yet done. We must own, that, for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. *Blessed be the Lord, that is, blessed be his glorious name;* for it is only in his name that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also *exalted above all blessing and praise.* Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ, for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him, (1.) As the Lord God, as a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, and our Sovereign Lord. (2.) As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people, and worshipped by them, and who does this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. (3.) As the God *who only does wondrous things*, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excels them all. Men's works are little common trifling things, which, however, without him, they could not do. But God does all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he does, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

2. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise; *Let the whole earth be filled with his glory;* as it will be when the *kings of Tarshish, and the isles, shall bring presents to him.* It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful Benefactor. All those, therefore, that wish well to the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly, be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, (1.) How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal; *"Amen and Amen,* again and again I say, I say it, and let all others say the same, so be it; Amen to my prayer; Amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purpose; *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come."* (2.) How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, *v. 20.* This was the last psalm that ever he penned, though not placed last in this collection; he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last; *"Let God be glorified, let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more. With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended; even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."*

PSALM LXXIII.

This psalm, and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of Asaph in the titles of them. If he was the penman of them, (as many think,) we rightly call them psalms of Asaph. If he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable that he penned them; for we read of the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, which were used in praising God, in Hezekiah's time, *2 Chron. xxix. 30.* Though the Spirit of prophecy, by sacred songs, descended chiefly on David,

who is therefore styled *the sweet psalmist of Israel*, yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use; it gives us an account of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and, by the help of which, he kept his ground, and carried his point, *v. 1.* He then tells us, I. How he got into the temptation, *v. 2. 14.* II. How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, *v. 15. 20.* III. How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, *v. 21. 28.* If, in singing this psalm, we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **T**RULY God is good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart. 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4. For *there* are no hands in their death; but their strength is firm. 5. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. 9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10. Therefore his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them: 11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? 12. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. 13. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

This psalm begins somewhat abruptly, *Yet God is good to Israel*, so the margin reads it: he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked; while he was thus musing, the fire burned, and, at last, he spake by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of; *"However it be, yet God is good."* Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own that he is, in a peculiar manner, good to Israel; they have favours from him, which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with—to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now, in this account,

I. He lays down, in the first place, that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was parleying with this temptation, *v. 1.* Job, when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God; *Times are not hidden from the Almighty,* Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle is, the justice of God; *Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee,* Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle is, the holiness of God; *Thou art of purer eyes than*

to behold iniquity, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's here, is, the goodness of God. These are truths which cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. *Truly God is good*; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providences of God, but this word, at last, settled him; For all this, God is good, *good to Israel, even to those that are of a clean heart.* Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is, in a special manner, good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and, in the various providences that related to them; he is, in like manner, good to all them that are of a clean heart, and, whatever happens, we must not think otherwise.

II. He comes, now, to relate the shock that was given to his faith, in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very near escape, that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation, v. 2. "But, as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone, the tempter had almost tripped up my heels, my steps had well nigh slipped, I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, for I was envious at the foolish." Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes very near it, and, in their own apprehension, as good as gone. Many a precious soul, that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn of its life; almost and well nigh ruined, but a step between it and fatal apostasy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace in the nations of them that are saved.

Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with, and tempted to do.

(1.) He observed that foolish wicked people have sometimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He saw, with grief, *the prosperity of the wicked*, v. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every stander-by sees their prosperity.

[1.] They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life; (v. 5.) *They are not in the troubles of other men*, even of wise and good men, *neither are they plucked like other men*, but seem as if, by some special privilege, they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

[2.] They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that *their eyes stand out with fatness*, v. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eyes, but they that indulge themselves inordinately in the delights of sense have their eyes ready to start

out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full, who have more than heart could wish, more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have, at least, more than an humble, quiet, contented, heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, v. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men; while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches; *They are the prosperous of the age*, so some read it.

[3.] Their end seems to be peace; this is mentioned first, on account of its being so strange; for it was never thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly; (xxxvii. 37.) yet, to outward appearance, it is often the lot of the ungodly; (v. 4.) *There are no bands in their death.* They are not taken off by a violent death; they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; *for their hands are not bound, nor their feet put in fetters*, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on, till, through old age, they gently drop off themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies, in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarcely feel themselves die. They are of those who die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; not of those that die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure, Job xxi. 23, 25. Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened either with remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery; but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

(2.) He observed that they made a very bad use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to fret at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had quite a contrary effect upon them.

[1.] It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; *Pride compasses them as a chain*, v. 6. They show themselves (to all that see them) to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men show their ornaments; *The pride of Israel testifies to his face*, Hos. v. 5. Isa. iii. 9. *Pride ties on their chain*, or necklace; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceases to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, (though we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9.) as what principle ties it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appear in their dress, so it does in their talk; *They speak loftily*; (v. 8.) they affect great swelling words of vanity, (2 Pet. ii. 18.) bragging of themselves, and disdaining all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

[2.] It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours; (v. 6.) *Violence covers them as a garment.* What they have got by fraud and oppression, they

keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. *They are corrupt*, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when the earth was filled with violence, Gen. vi. 11, 13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief-sake, or for their own advantage-sake. *They speak wickedly concerning oppression*, they oppress and justify themselves in it; they that speak well of sin, speak wickedly of it. *They are corrupt*, that is, dissolved in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious; (so some;) and then they deride and speak maliciously, they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny, from on high they speak oppression.

[3.] It made them very insolent in their carriage, toward both God and man; (v. 9.) *They set their mouth against the heavens*; putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him, and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands, to shake God's throne, else they would; but they show their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue also walks through the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue; they take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind; they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man.

[4.] In all this, they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked, if they had not learned to say, (v. 11.) *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?* So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if because he is *Most High*, he could not, or would not, see them, Job xxii. 12, 13. Whereas because he is *Most High*, therefore he can, and will, take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, *Is there knowledge in him?* Well may he say, (v. 12.) *Behold, these are the ungodly.*

(3.) He observed, that, while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with Providence.

[1.] He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss; (v. 10.) "Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither; they are at the same pause, the same plunge, that I am at; they know not what to say to it, any more than I do, and the rather, because waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep, of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all; care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion, the waters are wrung out unto them, that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely," as David did, cxix. 136. These are the waters wrung out to them.

[2.] He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of Providence, while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles; (v. 14.) "For my part," says he, "*All the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning*, as duly as the morning

comes." His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, *every morning* with the morning, and they continued, without intermission, *all the day long*. This he thought was very hard, that, when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he, that worshipped God, was under such great affliction. He spake feelingly when he spake of his own troubles; there is no disputing against sense, except by faith.

(4.) From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. [1.] Some, that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a Providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take v. 11. There are these, even among God's professing people, that say, "How does God know? Surely all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God." Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis tutet esse Deos?—Who will believe that there are Gods?* [2.] Though the psalmist's feet were not so far gone as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, (v. 13.) *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain*, and have, to no purpose, *washed my hands in innocency*. See here what it is to be religious; it is to cleanse our hearts, in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency, by an universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, "It is in vain," and "Religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by," because they see wicked people in prosperity. But however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, (Matth. v. 8.) they will not say that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.

15. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O LORD, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept his footing, and got the victory.

I. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, v. 15. He got the victory by degrees, and this was the first point he gained; he was ready to say, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain*, and thought he had reason to say it; but he kept his mouth with this consideration; "*If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should myself revolt and apostatize from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable to, the generation of thy children.*" Observe here, 1. Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an *Imprimatur*—A public sanction; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it

for the infection of others. But it is a good sign that we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remains with ourselves. If, therefore, thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to *lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, and let it go no further, Prov. xxx. 32. *If I say, I will speak thus.* Observe, Though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him, till he had debated within himself, whether it were fit to be mentioned or no. Note, We must think twice before we speak once; both because some things may be thought, which yet may not be spoken, and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. 2. The reason why he would not speak it, was, for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, (1.) There are a people in the world, that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their Father. (2.) We must be very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend *any of these little ones*, (Matth. xviii. 6.) especially which may offend the *generation of them*, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children, than to say that *we have cleansed our heart in vain*, or that it is in vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience, nor any thing that grieves them more, than to hear God thus reflected on. (4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do, in effect, quit the tents of God's children.

II. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought; (v. 16.) "I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of Providence; but *it was too painful for me*, I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning;" it is a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for, if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but (v. 17.) *he went into the sanctuary of God*; he applied himself to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the *things revealed which belong to us and to our children*; he consulted the scriptures, and the lips of the priests who attended the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and, at length, he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that, even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, 1. There are many great things, and things needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. The sanctuary therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. 2. We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end; all is well that ends well, everlastingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

(1.) The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which Providence sets them, are *slippery places*, (v. 18.) where they cannot long keep footing; but when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occa-

sion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling that it rests on firm ground.

(2.) Their destruction is sure, and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to *spend all their days in wealth*, and their death itself had no bands in it; *In a moment they go down to the grave*, so that even that could scarcely be called their *destruction*; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side death; hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. [1.] Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done; *They are cast down*; for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted; *Thou castest them down*, It is *destruction from the Almighty*, (Joel i. 15.) from the *glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. Who can support those whom God will cast down, on whom God will lay burthens? [2.] It is swift and sudden; Their damnation slumbers not; for *how are they brought into desolation as in a moment!* v. 19. It is easily effected, and will be a surprise to themselves and all about them. [3.] It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final, ruin; *They are utterly consumed with terrors*. It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their Enemy, fasten upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter them from them, nor strengthen them under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss, must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the sorer will their fall be when they are cast down into *destructions*, (for the word is plural,) and suddenly *brought into desolation*.

(3.) Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather; *quod erat demonstrandum—which was the point to be established*; v. 20. *As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest*, or when they awake, (as some read it,) *thou shalt despise their image*, their shadow, and make it to vanish. In the *day of the great judgment*, (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it,) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt, in wrath, despise their image; for *they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt*.

See here, [1.] What their prosperity now is; it is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passes away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; it is not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little, while we are asleep, yet, even then, it disturbs our repose; but, how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false; when we awake, we find it so. A hungry man *dreams that he eats, but he awakes, and his soul is empty*, Isa. xxix. 8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so. Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? [2.] What will be the issue of it; God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image; he shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, lii. 6, 7. How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!* Luke xii. 19, 20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth, and not to admire and envy that which he despises, and will despise;

for, sooner or later, he will bring all the world to be of one mind.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. 23. Nevertheless, *I am* continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25. Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* 26. My flesh and my heart faileth; *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* 27. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28. But *it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.*

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness;* for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that sore temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and does not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forward. It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, his struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace were not sufficient for them, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

I. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase and accuse himself before God; (v. 21, 22.) he reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself, by entertaining the temptation, and parleying with it; *My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins,* as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If evil thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he does not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. xii. 7. This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the *rotteness of the bones*, (Prov. xiv. 30.) where it does but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now, in the reflection upon it, 1. He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself; "So foolish was I to be my own tormentor." Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of, their discontents; "What a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause!" 2. He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this; "So ignorant was I of that which I might have known, and which, if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced my murmurs. *I was as a beast*, Behemoth, a great beast, *before thee.* Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far. What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity? To be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them? *So foolish was I.*" Note, If good men

do, at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act, amiss, when they see their error, they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence; will call themselves *fools* for it; *Surely I am more brutish than any man*, Prov. xxx. 2. Job xlii. 5, 6. Thus David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

II. He took occasion hence to own his dependence on, and obligations to, the grace of God; (v. 23.) "*Nevertheless, foolish as I am, I am continually with thee, and in thy favour, thou hast holden me by my right hand.*" This may refer, either, 1. To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had showed him, all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said, in the hour of temptation, (v. 14.) *All the day long have I been plagued;* but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint, "Though God has chastened me, he has not cast me off; notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, *I have been continually with thee*, I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair. Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still *holden me by my right hand*, both to keep me, that I should not desert him, or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burthens, or losing my way in the wilderness through which I have walked." If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation; *Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto.* And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, 2. To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror; "I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me, and taught me, (Heb. v. 2.) and kept me under thy protection;" for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalence of Christ's intercession for us, that our faith may not fail; "*My feet were almost gone*, and they had quite gone past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling."

III. He encouraged himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St. Paul does; (2 Tim. iv. 18.) "I am now upheld by thee, therefore *thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*; leading me, as thou hast done hitherto, many a difficult step; and, since I am now continually with thee, *thou shalt afterward receive me to glory.*" v. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God, shall be guided with his counsel, with the counsel both of his Word and of his Spirit, the best Counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves, for the future, to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it, with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness. If

God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterward, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory; the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

IV. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him; (v. 25, 26.) his thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter, comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to congratulate himself on this account. He had complained of his afflictions; (v. 14.) but this makes them very light and easy, *All is well, if God be mine*. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul toward God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really, which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination; *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* There is scarcely a verse, in all the psalms, more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up toward him, follows hard after him, and yet, at the same time, has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

1. It is here supposed that God alone is the Felicity and Chief Good of man. He, and he only, that made the soul, can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth, that can pretend to do it besides.

2. Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul toward God accordingly. If God be our Felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him; (*Whom have I but thee?*) we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the Felicity of souls, if he be not the Felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be toward him, and our delight in him; the word signifies both; we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him; this includes all our prayers, *Lord, give us thyself*; as that includes all the promises, *I will be to them a God*. *The desire of our souls is to thy name*.

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. [1.] "*There is none in heaven but thee*, none to seek to, or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with, but thee." God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being, (lxxxix. 6.) and must be, in our eyes, infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make us happy. His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of heaven, or the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. [2.] *I desire none on earth beside thee*; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lie. "Earth carries away the desires of most men, and yet I have none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights, that I desire beside thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee." We must

desire nothing beside God, but what we desire for him; (*Nil præter te, nisi propter te—Nothing beside thee, except for thy sake*;) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing beside God, as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, v. 26. Observe here, [1.] Great distress and trouble supposed; *My flesh and my heart fail*. Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect, the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; and that which touches the bone and the flesh, touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails, the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, courage, and comfort fail. [2.] Sovereign relief provided in this distress; *But God is the Strength of my heart, and my Portion for ever*. Note, Gracious souls, in their greatest distresses, rest upon God as their spiritual Strength, and their eternal Portion. First, "*He is the Strength of my heart*: the Rock of my heart, a firm Foundation, which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. *God the Strength of my heart*; I have found him so, I do so still, and hope ever to find him so." In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both *flesh and heart fail*; but in the relief, he fastens on a single support, he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is *the Strength of his heart*. He speaks as one careless of the body, (Let that fail, there is no remedy,) but as one concerned about the soul, to be *strengthened in the inner man*. Secondly, "*He is my Portion for ever*; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence." The saints choose God for their Portion, they have him for their Portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their Portion; a Portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

V. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people. This he learned in the sanctuary, upon this occasion, and he would never forget it; (v. 27.) "*Lo, they that are far from thee*, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be; they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever; thou shalt justly destroy all them that go a whoring from thee, all apostates, that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger." The doom is severe, no less than perishing, and being destroyed. It is universal; "*They shall all be destroyed without exception*." It is certain; "*Thou hast destroyed*:" it is as sure to be done as if done already; and the destruction of some ungodly men is an earnest of the perdition of all. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; "*Thou, though infinite in goodness, wilt reckon for thine injured honour and abused patience, and wilt destroy them that go a whoring from thee*."

VI. He was greatly encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him, v. 28. *If they that are far from God shall perish*, then, 1. Let this constrain us to live in communion with God; if it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man, in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure. "It is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me;" the original may take in both. *But for my part*, (so I would read it,) *the approach of God is good for me*. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that

makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, That it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, "It is good for me." Those are the wise, who know what is good for themselves; "It is good," says he, (and every good man agrees with him in it,) *it is good for me to draw near to God; it is my duty, it is my interest.*" 2. Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him; "I have put my trust in the Lord God, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature-confidences." If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them, (see cxlvi. 3-5.) in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fret at them nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is. 3. While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

PSALM LXXIV.

This psalm does so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and can so ill be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think, either, it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetic reference to that sad event; which yet is not so probable; or, that it was penned by another Asaph, who lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah, (for it is of a piece with his Lamentations,) or some other prophet, and, after the return out of captivity, was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church. That was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time. See Ezra ii. 41.—iii. 10. Neh. xi. 17, 22.—xii. 35, 46. The deplorable case of the people of God, at that time, is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet, in the name of the church, I. Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, v. 1-11. II. He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, v. 12-17. III. He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, v. 18-23. In singing it, we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the Christian church.

Maschil of Asaph.

1. **O** GOD, why hast thou cast us off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2. Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Sion, wherein thou hast dwelt. 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs. 5. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. 7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary; they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground. 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the

land. 9. We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long. 10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

This psalm is entitled *Maschil*, a *psalm*, *give instruction*, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction, in general, it gives us, That, when we are, upon any account, in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so.

Three things they here complain of.

I. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who, they knew, could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe the liberty they take to expostulate with God; (v. 1.) we hope, not too great a liberty, for Christ himself, upon the cross, cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So the church here, *O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever?* Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, *Has God cast away his people? God forbid*, Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off, therefore God does; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever: yet this expostulation intimates, that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men, and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them; *Why doth thine anger smoke?* Why does it rise up to such a degree, that all about us take notice of it, and ask, *What means the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. Compare v. 20. where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to *smoke* against sinners.

Observe what they plead with God, now that they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

1. They plead their relation to him; "We are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture, thy peculiar people, whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange; but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are thy congregation, (v. 2.) incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe, of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in, above other people, (Deut. xxxii. 9.) and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship, more than from the neighbouring nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion."

2. They plead the great things God had done for them, and the vast expense he had been at upon them; "It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people; it is thine inheritance,

which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude;" God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 3, 4. "Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee?" And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise.

3. They plead the calamitous state that they were in; (v. 3.) "*Lift up thy feet; come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irrepairable.*" It has been sometimes said, that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord, cry, *Lord, lift up thy feet. Exalt thy steps; magnify thyself in the outgoing of thy providence.* When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

II. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies; not so much, no not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more, than any worldly concern whatsoever. The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses; for the matter is not great what becomes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

1. He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, ch. ix. 17. The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary, or holy place, v. 7. In this, the enemies did wickedly, (v. 3.) for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to him. (1.) They roared in the midst of God's congregations; there where God's faithful people attend on him with an humble, reverent, silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling, manner, being elated with having made themselves masters of that sanctuary, of which they had sometimes heard formidable things. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs; the banners of their army they set up in the temple, (Israel's strongest castle, as long as they kept close to God,) as trophies of their victory. There where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God and his power touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as, formerly, men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell the timber for that work, so much, now, they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, v. 5, 6. Thus, as formerly those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, *They show themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees, for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscot of the temple, than wood-cutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving*

that ever was seen is beaten down by the common soldiers, without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing, or as a piece of exquisite art. (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, v. 7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly, fabric, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. And the Romans left not there one stone upon another (Matth. xxiv. 2.) razing it, razing it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

2. He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which, before the captivity, were in use, though much more after. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices. These also they had a spite to; (v. 8.) *Let us destroy them together; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them; let us destroy them together, let them be consumed in the same flame.* Pursuant to this impious resolve, they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses, because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another, by meeting in solemn assemblies.

III. The great aggravation of all these calamities, was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them; (v. 9.) "We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance; there is no more any prophet to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end; that the hope of an issue, at last, may support us under our troubles." In the captivity in Babylon, they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, (Ezek. xxxiv. 12.) and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries; God spake once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, "We see not our armies, there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts;" but, "no prophets, none to tell us how long."

This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying. 1. To assert his honour, (v. 10.) *How long shall the adversary reproach, and blaspheme thy name?* In the desolations of the sanctuary, our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our inquiry should be, not "How long shall we be troubled," but "How long shall God be blasphemed?" 2. To exert his power; (v. 11.) "*Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out, to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a man that cannot save, or will not,*" Jer. xiv. 9. When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12. For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers

16. The day is thine, the night also is thine : thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth : thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here, which she calls to mind, and *therefore hath she hope*, (as Lam. iii. 21.) with which she encourages herself, and silences her own complaints.

Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly.

I. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people; (v. 12.) *God is my King of old*. This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, (xliv. 4. *Thou art my King, O God*;) and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the *days of old*, lxxvii. 5. The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God, "My King, my King of old," or, "from antiquity;" he of old put himself into that relation to them, and appeared and acted for them in that relation; as Israel's King, he wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he did, in the government of the world, tended toward the salvation of his church.

Several things are here mentioned, which God had done for his people, as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him. 1. He had divided the sea before them, when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do anything. 2. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these enemies; God brake their heads, baffled their politics; as when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, multiplied the more; God crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and, at last, drowned them all in the Red sea; *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*, Ezek. xxxi. 18. It was the Lord's doing, none besides could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church; *Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel*, now going to inhabit the wilderness. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians' arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies, is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, Job xli. 6. (3.) God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock, and turning streams into rock, v. 15. [1.] He had dissolved the rock into waters; *Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood*; (so some read it;) and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that the Rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. [2.] He had congealed the waters into rock; *Thou driedst up mighty, rapid, rivers*, Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now

deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

II. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, v. 16, 17. It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, 1. Of day and night; he is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. *He has prepared the moon and the sun*; (so some read it;) the two great lights, to rule by day and night alternately. The preparing of them denotes their constant readiness, and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. 2. Of summer and winter; "Thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, the frigid and the torrid zones; or rather, the constant revolutions of the year, and its several seasons." Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how does this come in here? (1.) He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, this course of nature, by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. (2.) He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never cast off those whom he has chosen, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.—xxxiii. 20, 21. His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, Gen. viii. 21. (3.) Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature, throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other than that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be, in like manner, counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect affliction as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort, than we have to despair of day and summer.

18. Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD; and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. 20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. 21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. 23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles; to encourage his own faith, he interests God in this matter: (v. 22.) *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause*. This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause, he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it, and

with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it, though for a time he seems to neglect it; he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it.

Now, to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

I. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies; "Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been, and are, abusive to thee; what is done against us, for thy sake, does, by consequence, reflect upon thee. But that is not all, they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and *blasphemed thy name*," v. 18. This was that which they roared in the sanctuary; they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more, than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourages them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies, than when they are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace, and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this; "We dare not answer their reproaches, Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the *foolish people have blasphemed thy name*, (v. 18.) and that still the *foolish man reproaches thee daily*." Observe the character of those that reproach God; they are *foolish*. As atheism is folly, (xiv. 1.) profaneness and blasphemy are no less so. Perhaps they are cried up for the wits of the age, that ridicule religion and sacred things; but really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice; They reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him and praise him; see their impudence; They do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice; (*Forget not the voice of thine enemies*, v. 23.) and this, with a daring defiance of divine justice; They rise up against thee, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven, and take up arms against the Almighty. Their noise and tumult ascend continually, (so some,) as the cry of Sodom came up before God, calling for vengeance, Gen. xviii. 21. *It increases continually*; (so we read it;) they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now, Lord, *remember this, do not forget it*. God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must show our concern for his honour, and believe that he will vindicate us.

II. That the persecuted are his covenant-people.

1. See what distress they are in; they are fallen into the hands of the *multitude of the wicked*, v. 19. *How are they increased that trouble them!* There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially like these, armed with power; and as they are numerous, so they are barbarous; *The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty*. The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God, (though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts,) was indeed a dark place; the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, and therefore they were cruel: where there was no true divinity, there was scarcely to be found common humanity; they were especially cruel to the people of God; certainly they have no knowledge, who *eat them up*, xiv. 4. They are oppressed, (v. 21.) because they are poor and unable to right themselves; they are oppressed, and so made poor.

2. See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief, and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how

the psalmist pleads with God for them; (1.) "It is *thy turtle-dove* that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked," v. 19. The church is a dove, for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness; a dove, for mournfulness in a day of distress; a turtle-dove for fidelity, and the constancy of love: turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowls that were offered in sacrifice to God. "Shall thy turtle-dove, that is true to thee, and devoted to thine honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the *hand of the multitude of the wicked*, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thine honour to help the weak, especially to help thine own." (2.) "It is the *congregation of thy poor*, and they are not the less thine for their being poor; (for God has *chosen the poor of this world*, Jam. ii. 5.) but they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them, because they are *many*, it is the *congregation of thy poor*; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever." (3.) "They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not have respect unto the covenant? v. 20. Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast, in thy covenant, made to them? Wilt thou not own them whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant?" When God delivers his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, Lev. xxvi. 42. "Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant." (4.) "They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee, and expectations from thee; O let them not return ashamed of their hope, (v. 21.) as they will be, if they be disappointed." (5.) "If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name, and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it."

PSALM LXXV.

Though this psalm is attributed to Asaph, in the title, yet it does so exactly agree with David's circumstances, at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters apply it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it, in the person of David, as his poet-laureat; (probably, the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states, at his accession to the government, and Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spreading of it among the people;) or that David penned it, and delivered it to Asaph as a preceptor of the temple. In this psalm, I. David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, v. 1, 9. II. He promises to lay out himself for the public good, in the use of the power God had given him, v. 2, 3, 10. III. He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, v. 4, 5. IV. He fetches a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, v. 6, 8. In singing this psalm, we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel, and that he will make them all to work for the good of his church.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith. A psalm or song of Asaph.

1. **U**NTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare. 2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly. 3. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. 4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5. Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not* with a stiff neck.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power; and the other great things he had done for him, and for his people Israel; (v. 1.) *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks*, for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, *unto thee do we give thanks*; for our thanksgivings must be often repeated. Did not we often pray for mercy, when we were in pursuit of it; and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks, when we have obtained it? Not only *I* do give thanks, but *we* do; *I* and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises; "Unto thee, O God, the Author of our mercies; and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only. For that thy name is near, that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off, thy wondrous works, which thou hast already done for him, declare." Note, 1. There are many works which God does for his people, that may truly be called *wondrous works*, out of the common course of providence, and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name; they show that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for, and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again to give him thanks.

II. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him; (v. 2.) *When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly*. Here he takes it for granted, that God would, in due time, perfect that which concerned him, that though the congregation was very slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet, at length, he should receive it; for what God has spoken in his holiness, he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promises to make conscience of his duty; "When I am a judge, I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment, or, which was worse, perverted it; either did no good with their power, or did hurt." Note, 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour, must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He does not say, "When I shall receive the congregation, I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others;" but, "I will mind it myself." 2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; they that judge, must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

III. He promises himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, v. 3. The present state of the kingdom was very bad; *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*; and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute, that all went to rack and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners, for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another, for want of centering, as they ought to do, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three, and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but *I bear up the pillars of it*. Even in Saul's time, David did what he could for the public welfare; but he hoped, that, when he had himself received the congregation, he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now, 1. See the mis-

chief of parties; they melt and dissolve a land and the inhabitants of it. 2. See how much one head frequently holds up. The fabric had sunk, if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin, man's apostasy threatening the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it, he saved the whole world from utter ruin, by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of Providence is committed, for *he upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3.

IV. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it, and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he had made it his business to suppress; (v. 4, 5.) *I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly*. He had said so to them in Saul's time, when he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high, upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or rather, he does now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown, he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it. 1. To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, "*Deal not foolishly*; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do, while you walk contrary to the laws God has given Israel, and the promises he has made to David." Christ, the Son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, *Deal not foolishly*. He who is made of God to us Wisdom, bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. 2. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he says, "*Lift not up the horn*; boast not of your power and prerogatives, persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; *lift not up your horn on high*, as though you could have what you will, and do what you will; *speak not with a stiff neck*, in which is an iron sinew, that will never bend to the will of God in the government; for they that will not bend, shall break; they whose necks are stiffened, are so to their own destruction." This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that *every mountain will be brought low before him*, Isa. xl. 4. Let not the antichristian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck, must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, *Who is the Lord?* But God made him know, to his cost.

6. For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: 7. But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another. 8. For in the hand of the LORD *there is a cup*, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. 9. But I will declare for ever: I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off: *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses, we have two great doctrines bid d wn, and two good inferences drawn from

them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

I. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion.

1. That from God alone kings receive their power, (v. 6, 7.) and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; having his power from God, he would use it for him, and therefore they were fools that lifted up the horn against him. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some, and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes, when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the Author of them, and are here taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes preferment in kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence comes preferments in kingdoms, to places of power and trust in them? The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are here told, (1.) Negatively; which way we are not to look for the fountain of power; *Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert*, that is, neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem, nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly thence. Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or wealth of the children of the east, or by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles, that lay westward, or those of Egypt or Arabia, that lay south; no concurring smiles of second causes will raise men to preferment without the First Cause. The learned Bishop Lloyd (*Serm. in loc.*) gives this gloss upon it; All men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there, many knew not; the eastern nations, who were generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their god; No, says David, it comes neither from the east, nor from the west, neither from the rising, nor from the setting, of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, nor from the exaltation of the sun, or any star in the mid-heaven. He mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come thence; or, because the same word that signifies the north, signifies the secret place; and from the secret of God's counsel it does come; or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind is so good as to blow promotion, but as He directs, who has the winds in his fists. (2.) Positively; *God is the Judge*, the Governor or Umpire; when parties contend for the prize, he *puts down one, and sets up another*, as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes, and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace, that He, who is infinitely wise, holy, and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up, and put down, whom, and when, and how, he pleases. This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God, as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

2. That from God alone all must receive their doom; (v. 8.) *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup*, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients; a cup of affliction; the sufferings of Christ are called a *cup*, Matth. xx. 22. John xviii. 11. The judgments of God upon sinners are *the cup of the Lord's right hand*, Hab. ii. 16.

The wine is red, denoting the wrath of God, which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is full of mixture, prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end: there are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse, when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials, (1.) Are poured out upon all; see Rev. xv. 7. —xvi. 1. where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities; but, (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infusion; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now, in the terrors of conscience, and hereafter, in the torments of hell. They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall *enter into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones*. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, Rev. xiv. 10. The wicked man's cup, while he prospers in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

II. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. This being so, 1. He will praise God, and give him glory, for the power to which he had advanced him; (v. 9.) *I will declare for ever that which thy wondrous works declare*, v. 1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first, while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives; the exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob; knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. 2. He will use the power with which he is intrusted, for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, (v. 10.) as before, v. 2, 4. According to the duty of the higher powers, (1.) He resolves to be a terror to evil-doers, to humble their pride, and break their power; "Though not all the heads, yet *all the horns of the wicked will I cut off*, with which they push their poor neighbours; I will disable them to do mischief." Thus God promises to raise up carpenters which should *fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel*, Zech. i. 18-21. (2.) He resolves to be a Protection and Praise to them that do well; *The horns of the righteous shall be exalted*; they shall be preferred and put into places of power; and they that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, ci. 3, &c. Herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall *exalt with honour the horn of the righteous*, cxii. 9.

PSALM LXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The LXX call it, *A song upon the Assyrians*; whence many good interpreters conjecture, that it was penned when Sennacherib's army, then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder; but there was a

religious triumph upon occasion of another victory, in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm; (2 Chron. xx. 28.) and it might be called a *song of Asaph*, because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or it might be penned by Asaph, who lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whatever it was, I. The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church, in having God so nigh, v. 1. 3. II. He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of, v. 4. 6. III. He infers hence, what reason all have to fear before him, v. 7. 9. And, IV. What reason his people have to trust in him, and to pay their vows to him, v. 10. 12. It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving-day, upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old Testament victories were types of, at least, those that are celebrated in the psalms.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song of Asaph.

IN Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. 3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. 4. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. 5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep; and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant, even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the Centre of all our triumphs.

I. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, v. 1. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and where he is known his name will be great. God is known as he is pleased to make himself known; and they are happy to whom he discovers himself. Happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge! In Judah God was known, so as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the greater, inasmuch as it was distinguishing, cxlvii. 19, 20.

II. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, v. 2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known, and his name was great; but in Salem, in Zion, were his tabernacle and his dwelling-place; there he kept court, there he received the homage of his people by their sacrifices, and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices; thither they came, to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name; and of that place he said, *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a moveable dwelling; yet a little while is that light with us.

III. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies; (v. 3.) *There brake he the arrows of the bow.* Observe how threatening the danger was; though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furnished. Here are bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it

was done there, 1. In Judah and Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations, they answered their end, but, when turned against that holy nation, they were immediately broken. The Chaldee paraphrases it thus, When the house of Israel did his will, he placed his majesty among them, and there he brake the arrows of the bow; while they kept close to his service, they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, 2. In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion, there he brake the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which God's people there made to him, and in performance of the promises which he there made to them; of both which, see that instance, 2 Chron. xx. 5, 14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church, as to what is done in the camp.

Now this victory redounded very much,

(1.) To the immortal honour of Israel's God; (v. 4.) *Thou art*, and hast manifested thyself to be, *more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.* [1.] "Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver." [2.] "Than our invaders in particular: when they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us, than they are to annoy us." Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

(2.) To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, v. 5, 6. They were *stout-hearted*, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were *men of might*, robust, and fit for service; they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, xx. 7. But all this force was of no avail when it was levelled against Jerusalem. [1.] The stout-hearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves; (so some read it;) when God pleases, he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but their sleep, the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. [2.] The men of might can no more find their hands, than the stout-hearted can their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. [3.] The chariots and horses may be truly said to be *cast into a dead sleep*, when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob, that commands deliverances for Jacob, and, at his rebuke, the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep; when the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel, the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

7. Thou, *even thou, art* to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? 8. Thou didst cause judgment to

be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, 9. When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 11. Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

This glorious victory, with which God had graced and blessed his church, is here made to speak three things.

I. Terror to God's enemies; (v. 7-9.) "*Thou, even thou, art to be feared*; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee." Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. 1. Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners; *Who may stand in thy sight, from the minute that thou art angry?* If God be a consuming Fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though his *anger be kindled but a little*, ii. 12. 2. Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocence, and the injured cause of his own people; "*Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth*"; (v. 8, 9.) and then *the earth feared, and was still*, waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine." Note, (1.) God's people are the *meek of the earth*, (Zeph. ii. 3.) the *quiet in the land*, (xxxv. 20.) that can bear any wrong, but do none. (2.) Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will, sooner or later, appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. (3.) When God comes to save *all the meek of the earth*, he will *cause judgment to be heard from heaven*; he will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them, as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard. (4.) When God is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence; *The earth feared, and was still*, as silence is made by proclamation, when the court sits. *Be still, and know that I am God*, xlv. 10. *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment*, Zech. ii. 13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army, take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel, who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which *God caused judgment to be heard from heaven*, and that the earth feared, that is, there was an earthquake, but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

II. Comfort to God's people, v. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world, we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us, 1. That, as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself, and serve his own purposes by it; *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*, not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the liberty given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies are made to redound to

the glory of God and his grace; and the more *the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his Anointed*, the more will God be praised for setting *his King upon his holy hill of Zion*, in spite of them, ii. 1, 6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-songs, that God has *taken to him his great power, and has reigned, though the nations were angry*, (Rev. xi. 17, 18.) then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God. 2. That what will not turn to his praise, shall not be suffered to break out; *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea; *Hitherto it shall come, and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed*. God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put *a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws*; (Isa. xxxvii. 29.) and, though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

III. Duty to all, v. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects.

Observe, 1. The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are, therefore, every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings; *Vow and pay*; take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him, (for that is the nature of a vow,) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for *better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay*. And, having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their Sovereign, 1 Sam. x. 27. *Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land*, Isa. xvi. 1. Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefitted by it; but thus we must give him honour, and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. 2. The reasons to enforce this duty; *Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due*; and is it not due to God? Yes; (1.) He ought to be feared; *He is the Fear*, so the word is; his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper Object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called *the Fear of Isaac*; (Gen. xxxi. 42.) and we are commanded to *make him our Fear*, Isa. viii. 13. When we bring presents to him, we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. (2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their sole prerogative to be feared; (v. 12.) *He shall cut off the spirit of princes*; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring, and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, *terrible to the kings of the earth*; and, sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to *rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his wrath*, Rev. vi. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.

PSALM LXXVII.

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the public concerns of the church, so that it is not certain whether it was penned upon a personal or a public account. If they were private troubles that he was

groaning under, it teaches us, that what God has wrought for his church in general, may be improved for the comfort of particular believers; if it was some public calamity that he is here lamenting, his speaking of it so feelingly, as if it had been some particular trouble of his own, shows how much we should lay to heart the interests of the church of God, and make them ours. One of the rabbins says, This psalm is spoken in the dialect of the captives; and therefore some think it was penned in the captivity in Babylon. 1. The psalmist complains here of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirits, and the temptation he was in to despair of relief, v. 1. 10. 11. He encourages himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, v. 11. 20. In singing this psalm, we must take shame to ourselves for all our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise, and give to him the glory of his power and goodness, by a thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly, and a cheerful dependence on him for the future.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun. A psalm of Asaph.

1. **I** CRIED unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. 2. In the day of my trouble I sought the LORD: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. 3. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. 4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search. 7. Will the LORD cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. 10. And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man, under prevailing melancholy, fallen into, and sinking in, that horrible pit and that miry clay, but struggling to get out. Drooping saints, that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here in this glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his griefs and fears seems to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he says, (v. 1.) *I cried unto God, and he gave ear unto me*; which, while the struggle lasted, he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterward; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative, as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and, at length, he knew that he heard him. Observe,

I. His melancholy prayers. Being afflicted, he prayed, (Jam. v. 13.) and, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; (v. 1.) *My voice was unto God, and I cried even with my voice unto God*. He was full of complaints, but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate. Thus he gave vent to his grief, and gained some ease; and thus he took the right way in order to relief; (v. 2.) *In the day of*

my trouble I sought the Lord. Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us; we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble, he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but must pray it away. *My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not*; so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare cxliii. 5, 6.

II. His melancholy grief. Grief may then be called melancholy indeed, 1. When it admits of no intermission; such was his; *My sore*, or wound, *ran in the night*, and bled inwardly, and it ceased not, no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. 2. When it admits of no consolation; and that also was his case; *My soul refused to be comforted*; he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. *As vinegar upon nitre*, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart, Prov. xxv. 20. Nor had he any mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow, upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

III. His melancholy musings. He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that, 1. The methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief, v. 3. (1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God should have comforted him, but it did not; *I remembered God, and was troubled*, as poor Job; (ch. xxiii. 15.) *I am troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him*. When he remembered God, his thoughts fastened only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty; and thus God himself became a Terror to him. (2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God should have given him ease, but it did not; he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed, and sank under the load. 2. The means of his present relief were denied him, v. 4. He could not enjoy sleep, which, if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares; "*Thou holdest mine eyes waking with thy terrors, which make me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day*." He could not speak, by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, the tumult of his spirits, and the confusion his mind was in; *he kept silence even from good*, while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle, (Job xxxii. 19.) and yet so troubled, that he could not speak and refresh himself. Grief never preys so much upon the spirits as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

IV. His melancholy reflections; (v. 5, 6.) "*I have considered the days of old*, and compared them with the present days; and our former prosperity does but aggravate our present calamities; for we see not the wonders that our fathers told us of." Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou that the former days were better than these, because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, Eccl. vii. 10. Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost make us unthankful for those that are left or impatient under our crosses.

Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows, and entertained

himself in his former solitude; these songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but *pour out his soul in him*, xliii. 4. See Job xxxv. 10.

V. His melancholy fears and apprehensions; "*I communed with mine own heart*, v. 6. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? what can I think of them? and what can I expect they will come to at last? I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, inquiring wherefore God contended with me, and what would be the consequences of it. And thus I began to reason, *Will the Lord cast off for ever*, as he does for the present? He is not now favourable; and *will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone; and is it clean gone for ever? His promise now fails; and does it fail for evermore?* God is not now gracious; but *has he forgotten to be gracious?* His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom; but are they shut up, shut up in anger?" v. 7-9. This is the language of a disconsolate deserted soul, walking in darkness, and having no light; a case not uncommon even with those that *fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant*, Isa. i. 10. He may here be looked upon, 1. As groaning under a sore trouble; God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is, of all others, most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierces it like the apprehensions of God's being angry, the suspending of his favour, and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit; and who can bear that? 2. As grappling with a strong temptation. Note, God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and, as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us, and cast us off, that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercy of our God shall be for ever withheld from us. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these. If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the scripture; *Will the Lord cast off for ever?* God forbid, Rom. xi. 1. No, *The Lord will not cast off his people*, xciv. 14. *Will he be favourable no more?* Yes, he will; *for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion*, Lam. iii. 32. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?* No; *his mercy endures for ever*; as it is *from everlasting*, it is *to everlasting*, ciii. 17. *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* No; *it is impossible for God to lie*, Heb. vi. 18. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name, which he hath proclaimed *gracious and merciful*, Exod. xxxiv. 6. *Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* No; they are *new every morning*; (Lam. iii. 23.) and therefore, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* Hos. xi. 8, 9.

Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when, on a sudden, he first checked himself with that word, *Selah*; "Stop there, go no further, let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises;" and he then chid himself; (v. 10.) *I said, This is mine infirmity*. He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? I said, "This is mine affliction;"* (so some understand it,) "this is the calamity that falls to my lot, and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up." Or rather, "This is my sin, it is mine iniquity; the plague of my own heart." These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith, and the corruption of a distempered mind. Note, (1.) We all know that concerning ourselves of which we

must say, "*This is our infirmity*, a sin that most easily besets us." (2.) Dependency of spirit, and distrust of God, under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people, and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here; *This is my infirmity*. When, at any time, it is working in us, we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here; *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*. He had been considering the *years of ancient times*, (v. 5.) the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them as the *years of the right hand of the Most High*; that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand, who is over all, God blessed for ever; and this satisfied him; for may not the Most High with his right hand make what changes he pleases?

11. I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. 13. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God! 14. Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. 17. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silences his own fears of God's casting off his people, by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which, though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with, (v. 5, 6.) yet he tried again, and, upon this second trial, found it not in vain. It is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first; "*I will remember, surely I will*, what God has done for his people of old, till I can thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations," v. 11, 12. Note, 1. The works of the Lord, for his people, have been wondrous works. 2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves, and others, further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changes not. If he begin, he will finish his work, and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things, in general, satisfied him very much.

I. That *God's way is in the sanctuary*, v. 13. It is in holiness, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the Divine Providence, this we are sure of, in general, That God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself, and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he does, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise, which he has spoken in his holiness, and made known in the sanctuary; what he has done is according to what he has said, and may be interpreted by it; and, from what he has said, we may easily gather that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it. All he does is intended for the good of his church.

II. That *God's way is in the sea*; though God is holy, just, and good, in all he does, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs; *His path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known*, v. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters, which cannot be fathomed; (xxxvi. 6.) like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked; Prov. xxx. 18, 19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for.

He specifies some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers, 1. That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel; (v. 13.) *Who is so great a God as our God?* Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him therein great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he has done, and encourage ourselves with it. 2. That he is a God of almighty power; (v. 14.) *"Thou art the God that alone doest wonders, above the power of any creature; thou hast, visibly, and beyond any contradiction, declared thy strength among the people."* What God has done for his church, has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm.

(1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt, v. 15. This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the pass-over; *"Thou hast with thine arm, stretched out in so many miracles, redeemed thy people out of the hand of the Egyptians."* Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption which was to be wrought out, in the fulness of time, both by price and power. Those that were redeemed are here called, not only the *sons of Jacob*, to whom the promise was made, but of *Joseph* also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it; for, when he was dying, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones.

(2.) He divided the Red sea before them; (v. 16.) *The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him.* Not only the surface of the waters, but the *depths, were troubled*, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(3.) He destroyed the Egyptians; (v. 17.) *The clouds poured out water upon them, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels.* Then *the skies sent out*

a sound, thine arrows also went abroad; which is explained, (v. 18.) *The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven*, that is, the sound which the skies sent forth; *The lightnings lightened the world*; those are the arrows which went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited with so much terror, that *the earth of the adjacent coast trembled and shook.* Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet, when the waters returned to their place, *his footsteps were not known*; (v. 19.) there was no mark set upon the place, as there was afterward in Jordan, Josh. iv. 9. We do not read, in the story of Israel's passing through the Red sea, that there were thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus says there were, such displays of the divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, that were at mount Sinai when the law was given.

(4.) He took his people Israel under his own guidance and protection; (v. 20.) *Thou leddest thy people like a flock.* They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a Shepherd, that they might not fail. The pillar of cloud and fire led them, yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high-priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers, to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry, is, though not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy, to any people, as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and does not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected. But, as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things, he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter *gave him light and joy*; (cxix. 130.) his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further; he *went his way, and did eat, and his countenance was no more sad.*

PSALM LXXVIII.

This psalm is historical; it is a narrative, of the great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, the great sins whereunto they had provoked him, and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began, in the foregoing psalm, to relate God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement in a difficult time; there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlarges much upon it; showing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy, but how basely they had conducted themselves toward God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, I. The preface to this church-history, commanding the attention of the present age to it, and recommending it to the study of the generations to come, v. 1.-8. II. The history itself from Moses to David; it is put into a psalm or song, that it might be the better remembered, and transmitted to posterity, and that the singing of it might affect them with the things here related, more than they would be with a bare narrative of them. The general scope of this psalm we have, v. 9.-11. where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under, (v. 9.) the sin which brought them under those rebukes, (v. 10.) and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, v. 11. As to the particulars, we are here told, I. What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt, (v. 12.-16.) providing for them in the wilderness, (v. 23.-29.) plaguing and ruining their enemies, (v. 43.-53.) and, at length,

putting them in possession of the land of promise, v. 54, 55. 2. How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them, and how many and great provocations they were guilty of. How they murmured against God, and distrusted him, (v. 17. . 20.) and did but counterfeit repentance and submission when he punished them, (v. 34. . 37.) thus grieving and tempting him, v. 40. . 42. How they affronted God with their idolatries, after they came to Canaan, v. 56. . 58. 3. How God had justly punished them for their sins, (v. 21, 22.) in the wilderness, making their sin their punishment, (v. 29. . 33.) and now, of late, when the ark was taken by the Philistines, v. 59. . 64. 4. How graciously God had spared them, and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations. He had forgiven them formerly, (v. 38, 39.) and now, of late, had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment, both in church and state, v. 65. . 72. As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us, in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us, and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us, for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning. *These things happened unto them for examples, 1 Cor. x. 11, Heb. iv. 11.*

Maschil of Asaph.

1. **G**IVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old; 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4. We will not hide *them* from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; 6. That the generation to come might know *them*, *even* the children *which* should be born, *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children: 7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: 8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, show that the psalm answers the title; it is indeed *Maschil*, a psalm to give instruction; if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault. Here,

I. The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote; (v. 1.) *Give ear, O my people, to my law.* Some make these the psalmist's words; David, as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet-singer of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his *law* or *edict*, such was their commanding force in themselves; every good truth, received in the light and love of it, will have the power of the law upon the conscience; yet that was not all, David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people. If God, by his grace, make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, be-

cause their word will be a law to all about them, who must therefore give ear, and hearken; for to what purpose is divine revelation brought to our ears, if we will not incline our ears to it, both humble ourselves, and engage ourselves to hear it, and heed it? Or, the psalmist, being a prophet, speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them *his people*, and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. Let him that has an ear thus hear *what the Spirit saith unto the churches*, Rev. ii. 7.

II. Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1. The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration, strange, and need it; (v. 2.) *I will open my mouth in a parable*, in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent, and well worthy your attention; *I will utter dark sayings*, which challenge your most serious regards as much as the enigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to try one another. These are called *dark sayings*, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired, and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth, (Matth. xiii. 35.) which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men.

2. They are the monuments of antiquity; *dark sayings of old, which our fathers have told us*, v. 3. They are things of undoubted certainty, we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them. The gospel of Luke is called a *declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us*; (Luke i. 1.) so were the things here related. The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors obliges us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and, as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.

3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down; (v. 4.) because our fathers told them us, *we will not hide them from their children*. Our children are called *theirs*, for they were in care for their seed's seed, and looked upon them as theirs; and, in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to *their* children, the children of others. Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity; and for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well as for the generation that is next rising up, and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children, is, not only the knowledge of languages, arts, and sciences, liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great deposit, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us.

There are two things, the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs.

(1.) The law of God; for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children; (v. 5.) *He established a testimony or covenant, and enacted a law*, in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he *commanded them to make known to their children*, Deut. vi. 7, 20. The church of God, as the historian says of the Roman commonwealth, was not to be *res unius retatis*—a business of one age, but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the

tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law; and when they were grown up, they must arise, *and declare them to their children*, (v. 6.) that, as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passes away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

(2.) The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seem to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient, and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children and our children's children.

[1.] That they may take encouragement to conform themselves to the will of God, v. 7. That, not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, might make his command their rule, and his covenant their stay; those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation, that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both.

[2.] That they may take warning not to conform themselves to the example of their fathers; (v. 8.) *That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* See here, *First*, What was the character of their fathers; though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for aught we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will; they did indeed profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts right, they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their *spirit was not steadfast with him*, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy; those that do not set their hearts right, will not be steadfast with God, but play fast and loose. *Secondly*, What was a charge to the children; *That they be not as their fathers.* Note, Those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps. It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our fathers; (1 Pet. i. 18.) for what we know of them, that was evil, must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them, as we would shun those courses which they took, that were ruinous to their health or estates.

9. The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. 10. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; 11. And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them. 12. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, *in the field of Zoan*. 13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap. 14. In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness,

and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths. 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. 18. And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. 19. Yea, they spake against God: they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? 21. Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation; 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. 26. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven; and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; 28. And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; 30. They were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat *was* yet in their mouths, 31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel. 32. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. 33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: 35. And they remembered that God *was* their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues: 37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. 38. But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath: 39. For he remembered that they *were* but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, v. 9.-11. The children of Ephraim, in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed, and shot with

bows, yet *turned back in the day of battle*. This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. Of this the psalmist here begins to speak, and, after a long digression, returns to it again, v. 61. Well might that event be thus fresh in mind, in David's time, above forty years after, for the ark, which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity, till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe, 1. The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, turned back, when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone, if God be gone. Sin dispirits men, and takes away the heart. 2. The causes of their cowardice, which were no less shameful; and these were, (1.) A shameful violation of God's law, and their covenant with him; (v. 10.) they were basely treacherous and perfidious, for *they kept not the covenant of God*, and basely stubborn and rebellious, (as they were described, v. 8.) for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and, in effect, told him to his face they would not be ruled by him. (2.) A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them; they *forgot his works and his wonders*, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, v. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

II. He takes occasion hence to consult precedents, and to compare this with their fathers' case; who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them, and ungrateful to their Founder and great Benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very remarkable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness, and mercy, at length, rejoices against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first incorporated them, and formed them into a people; *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers*, and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit; so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is barely mentioned here, (v. 12.) but afterward resumed, v. 43. He proceeds here to show, (1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red sea, and caused them, gave them courage, to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads, as a heap, v. 13. See Isa. lxiii. 12, 13. where God is said to *lead them by the hand*, as it were, *through the deep*, that they should not stumble. (2.) How he provided a guide for them through the untrodden paths of the wilderness; (v. 14.) he led them step by step, in the day-time, by a cloud, which also sheltered them from the heat, and *all the night with a light of fire*, which perhaps warmed the air, at least, made the darkness of night less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, Zech. ii. 5. (3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water, in a dry and thirsty land where no water was; not by opening the bottles of heaven, (that had been a common way,) but by broaching a rock; (v. 15, 16.) *He clave the rocks in the wilderness*, which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above, or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams *running down like rivers*, and as out of the great depths. God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes

makes us to feel the want of mercies, that we may the better know the worth of them. This water, which God gave Israel out of the rock, was the more valuable, because it was spiritual drink, and that Rock was Christ.

2. When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him; (v. 17.) *They sinned yet more against him*, more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, Ezek. xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance, and never murmured at their task-masters, so as they did at Moses and Aaron; as if they were *delivered to do all these abominations*, Jer. vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceeding sinful; *They provoked the Most High*; though he is Most High, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him, and even bid defiance to his justice. And this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy, and therefore they were bound in interest to please him; and where he showed them so much mercy, and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him; *They tempted God in their heart*, v. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity; *They do always err in their heart*, Heb. iii. 10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost, whether he would bear with them or no; and, in effect, bid him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him;

(1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them; *They asked meat for their lust*. God had given them meat for their hunger, in the manna, wholesome pleasant food, and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of leviathan, which *he brake in pieces*, lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.

(2.) By distrusting his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed! They challenged him to give them flesh; and if he did not, they would say, it was because he could not, not because he did not see it fit for them; (v. 19.) *They spake against God*. They that set bounds to God's power, speak against him. It was as injurious a reflection as could be cast upon God, to say, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* They had manna, but they did not think they had a table furnished, unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third, course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and sauce too; (Exod. xvi. 3. Numb. xi. 5.) dishes of meat, and salvers of fruit. What an unreasonable, insatiable, thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be, that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas, the *beasts of the forest*, and all the *fowls of the mountains*, are his, 1. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse, in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to; (v. 20.) *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out*, which they and their cattle drank of. And whether is it easier to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question; "Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water, give bread also?" Or, can he, that has given bread, provide flesh also? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? When once

the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded, God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude nothing is impossible with him. Be it ever so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.*

3. God justly resented the provocation, and was much displeased with them; (v. 21.) *The Lord heard this, and was wroth.* Note, God is a Witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them, and is much displeased with them. *A fire was kindled for this against Jacob, the fire of the Lord burnt among them,* Numb. xi. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming Fire. Those that will not believe the power of God's mercy, shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.* Now here we are told,

(1.) Why God thus resented the provocation, v. 22. Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God, they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him; *They trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them;* for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last, who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. That which aggravated their unbelief, was, the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, v. 23-25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; *for he commanded the clouds from above,* as one that had created them, and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Usually, by their showers, they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here *the corn of heaven;* for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God, who has the key of the clouds, *opened the doors of heaven,* that is more than *opening the windows,* which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal. iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer, ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened, for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; he not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill that they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them, that he *had rained down manna upon them to eat,* substantial food, daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each; *Man did eat angels' food,* such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful; or rather such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the *Chaldee* reads it) such as descended from the dwelling of angels. Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat the bread of the mighty; (so the margin reads it;) the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing, that it was strong meat for strong men. And though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for he sent them meat to the full; if they gathered little, it was their own fault; and yet even then they had no lack, Exod. xvi. 18. The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation; not in denying them what they so inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them. [1.] Did they question his power? He soon gave

them a sensible conviction that he could *furnish a table in the wilderness.* Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet, when he pleased, he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions, v. 26. *He caused an east-wind to blow, and a south-wind,* either a south-east-wind, or an east-wind, first to bring in the quails from *that* quarter, and then a south-wind to bring in more from *that* quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicate sort, not butchers'-meat, but wild-fowl and abundance of it, *as dust, as the sand of the sea,* (v. 27.) so that the meanest Israelite might have sufficient; and it cost them nothing, no, not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, *for He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation,* v. 28. We have the account, Numb. xi. 31, 32. See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness does not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour; Christ gave dry bread to the disciples that he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. [2.] Did they defy his justice, and boast that they had gained their point? He made them pay dear for their quails, for, though he *gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust;* (v. 29, 30.) their appetite was insatiable, they were well-filled, and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what they would have; such is the nature of lust, it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured, the more humoursome it grows. They that indulge their lust will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done, if they had had any sense of honour. But what came of it? While *the meat was yet in their mouth,* rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, *the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them,* (v. 31.) those that were most luxurious, and most daring. See Numb. xi. 33, 34. They were fed as *sheep for the slaughter;* the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites, that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom; the end of those who make a *god of their belly, is destruction,* Phil. iii. 19. The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, and their ruin will be the greater.

4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, any more than his mercies; (v. 32.) *For all this, they sinned still,* they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though *God was wroth, and smote them, yet they went on frowardly in the way of their heart;* (Isa. lviii. 17.) *they believed not for his wondrous works.* Though his works of justice were as wondrous, and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their Friend. These hearts are hard indeed, that will neither be melted by the mercies of God, nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly. He punished them, not now with such acute diseases as that which *slew the fattest of them,* but a lingering chronical distemper; (v. 33.) *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity,* in the wilderness, and *their years in trouble.* By an irreversible doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which, indeed, were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were

turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, not one stroke struck toward the conquest of it: and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcasses were condemned to fall in the wilderness, and there they all perished, but Caleb and Joshua. Note, Those that sin still, must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes, they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in it. (1.) Their profession was plausible enough; (*v.* 34, 35.) *When he slew them, or condemned them to be slain, then they sought him;* they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain, others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform, and be very good; then *they returned to God, and inquired early after him.* So one would take them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretend to do this, because, however they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that God was their Rock, and therefore, now that they needed him, they would fly to him, and take shelter in him; and now they remembered that the high God was their Redeemer, who brought them out of Egypt, and to whom, therefore, they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our Rock and our Redeemer; for, in prosperity, we are apt to forget him. (2.) They were not sincere in this profession; (*v.* 36, 37.) *They did but flatter him with their mouth,* as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence, and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not *return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly*, Jer. iii. 10. All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack; it was plain that they did not mean as they said, for they did not adhere to it; they thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade; they did but *lie to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, was not right with him, as appeared by the issue, *for they were not steadfast in his covenant.* They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant; and, by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections.

7. God, hereupon, in pity to them, put a stop to the judgments which were threatened, and in part executed; (*v.* 38, 39.) *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity.* One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to *lie thus to the holy God*, than thus to *keep back part of the price*, the chief part? Acts v. 3. And yet *he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity* thus far, that he did not destroy them, and cut them off from being a people, as he justly might have done, but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*, Isa. lxxv. 8. *Many a time he turned his anger away;* for he is Lord of his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath, to deal with them as they deserved. And why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but, (1.) Because he was full of compassion, and, when he was going to destroy them, *his repentings were kindled together*, and he said, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* Hos. xi. 8. (2.) Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their Rock, *he remembered that they were but flesh.* He considered the corruption of their nature, which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for

their sin. See Gen. vi. 3. He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them; *They are as a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.* They may soon be taken off; but, when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; whence it were easy to argue, they may justly, they may immediately, be cut off, and there would be no loss of them: but God argues on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, *He is full of compassion.*

40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41. Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy: 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: 44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore-trees with frost. 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51. And smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. 55. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies; 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. 62. He gave his people over also

unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. 63. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. 65. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; 68. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion, which he loved. 69. And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: 71. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The matter and scope of this paragraph are the same with the former, showing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how, in judgment, he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby emboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

I. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition; (v. 40, 41.) *How often did they provoke him in the wilderness?* Not once, or twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place, (v. 17.) God kept an account how often they provoked him, though they did not; (Numb. xiv. 22.) *They have tempted me these ten times.* By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him, for he looked upon them as his children, *Israel is my son, my first-born*, and the unprofitful, disrespectful, behaviour of children does more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, Isa. i. 2. They grieved him, because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them; which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him, they *turned back and tempted God*, as before, and *limited the Holy One of Israel*, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them, and what methods he should take in leading them, and providing for them. They limited him to their way, and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit the *Holy One of Israel*; for, being the *Holy One*, he will do what is most for his own glory; and, being the *Holy One of Israel*, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom, and betray our own pride and folly, if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future, was, their forgetting of his former favours; (v. 42.) *They remembered not his hand*, how strong it is, and how it had been stretched out for them, nor *the day*

when he delivered them from the enemy, Pharaoh, that great enemy who sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten, for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

II. The mercies of God to Israel, which they were unmindful of when they tempted God, and limited him; this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them, begins higher, and is carried down further, than that before, v. 12, &c.

1. This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go: these were the signs God wrought in Egypt, (v. 43.) the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan, that is, in the country of Zoan, as we say, *in Agro N.* meaning in such a country.

Dividers of the plagues of Egypt are here specified, which speak aloud the power of God, and his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As, (1.) The *turning of the waters into blood*: they had made themselves drunk with the blood of God's people, even the infant's, and now God gave them blood to drink, *for they were worthy*, v. 44. (2.) The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals, which devoured them, which destroyed them, v. 45. For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath, when he pleases; what they want in strength may be made up in number. (3.) The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, v. 46. They are called *God's great army*, Joel ii. 25. (4.) The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees, (v. 47.) and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunderbolts; (v. 48.) and the frost, or congealed rain, (as the word signifies,) was so violent, that it destroyed even the sycamore trees. (5.) The death of the first-born was the last and sorest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention, (Exod. iv. 23.) but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work, this had been prevented: but it is here largely described, v. 49-51. [1.] The anger of God was the cause of it; wrath was now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened after lesser judgments had softened it, God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree; wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble, tribulation, and anguish, (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them, and did not spare, and they could not *flee out of his hands*, Job xxvii. 22. *He made a way*, or, as the word is, *He weighed a path, to his anger*; he did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight; his anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for, in his greatest displeasure, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; the path of his anger is always weighed. [2.] The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution; *He sent evil angels among them*; not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders, according to the weighed paths of God's anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only. Good angels become evil angels to sinners; they that make the holy God their Enemy, must never expect the holy angels to be their friends. [3.] The execution itself was very severe; *He spared not their soul from death* but suffered death to ride in triumph among them and gave their life over to the pestilence, which cut

the thread of life off immediately; for *he smote all the first-born in Egypt*, (v. 51.) *the chief of their strength*, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents' strength, and the first-born the *chief of their strength*. Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xlii. 4.

By these plagues on the Egyptians, God made a way for *his own people to go forth like sheep*; distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, as the *shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats*, having set his own mark on these sheep, by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door-posts. *He made them go forth like sheep*, not knowing whither they went, and *guided them in the wilderness*, like as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, v. 52. *He led them on safely*, though in dangerous paths, so that they *feared not*, that is, they needed not to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red sea, (Exod. xiv. 10.) but that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. *But the sea overwhelmed their enemies*, that ventured to pursue them into it, v. 53. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

2. It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan; (v. 54.) *He brought them to the border of his sanctuary*, to that land, in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was, as it were, the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory, of it; that is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary; it was the happiness of that land, that there God was known, and there were his sanctuary and dwelling-place, lxxvi. 1, 2. The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was the *mountain which his right hand had purchased*, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See xlv. 3. *He made them to ride on the high places of the earth*, Isa. lviii. 14. Deut. xxxii. 13. They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God *cast out the heathen before them*, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and, as Lord of hosts, turned them out of it, and made his people *Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line*, and making them *to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed*. God could have turned the uninhabited, uncultivated, wilderness (which perhaps was nearly of the same extent as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be *the glory of all lands*; it must likewise be fought for, *for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence*.

III. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan; (v. 56-58.) The children were *like their fathers*, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations; though God had done so much for them, yet *they tempted and provoked the most high God still*. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began in very promisingly, but they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but, when it is drawn, breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot, or, perhaps, makes it recoil in his face. There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and *provoked him to anger by their high places and their graven images*. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols, or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and

therefore by it they are said to *move him to jealousy*, Deut. xxii. 16, 21.

IV. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way, than their descent from Israel; *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel. 1. God was displeased with them; (v. 59.) *When God heard this*, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came up before him, *he was wroth*, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved and delighted in. They that had been the people of his choice, became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. 2. He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, v. 60. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name is *Jealous*, and he is a jealous God; and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself be loathed and rejected, and he refuse to cohabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. The *tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men*, in which God would *in very deed dwell with men upon the earth*; but when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. 3. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people. (1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to show that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence; (v. 61.) *He delivered his strength into captivity*, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemy's hand. We have the story, 1 Sam. iv. 11. When the ark is become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. (2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines; (v. 62, 63.) *He gave his people over unto the sword*, to the sword of his own justice, and of the enemy's rage, for he *was wroth with his inheritance*; and that wrath of his was the *fire which consumed their young men* in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them, that *their maidens were not raised, were not given in marriage*, which is honourable in all; because there were no young men for them to be given to, and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great, that the joys of marriage-solemnities were judged unseasonable; and it was said, *Blessed is the womb that beareth not*. General destructions produce a scarcity of men; (Isa. xiii. 12.) *I will make a man more precious than fine gold*, so that *seven women shall take hold of one man*, Isa. iv. 1.—iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst, (3.) Even their priests, who attended the ark, fell by the sword, Hophni and Phinehas; justly they fell, for they made themselves vile, and were sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection, that it aggravated their sin, and hastened their fall; justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant; we throw ourselves out of God's protection, when we go out of our place, and out of

the way of our duty. When the priests fell, *their w dowrs made no lamentation*, v. 64. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son *Ichabod*, 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c.

V. God's return, in mercy, to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was *grieved for the miseries of Israel*, (Judg. x. 16.) and concerned for his own honour, *fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely*, Deut. xxxii. 27. And therefore *then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep*, (v. 65.) and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine; not only like one that is raised out of sleep, and recovers himself from the slumber which, by drinking, he was overcome with, who then regards that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it; stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

I. He plagued the Philistines who held the ark in captivity, v. 66. He smote them with emeralds in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even then when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach, by the golden images of their emeralds, which they returned with the ark for a trespass-offering, (1 Sam. vi. 5.) to remain in *perpetuum rei memoriam*—as a perpetual memorial. Note, Sooner or later, God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, then when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark, after it had been some months in captivity, and some years in obscurity. He did indeed *refuse the tabernacle of Joseph*, he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, v. 67. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of divine justice. *Go, see what I did to Shiloh*, Jer. vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not; God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as, long after, the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12. When God *chose not the tribe of Ephraim*, of which tribe Joshua was, he *chose the tribe of Judah*, (v. 68.) because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah; there it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Zion, that mount Zion which he loved, (v. 68.) which was *beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*; there it was, that he *built his sanctuary like high palaces, and like the earth*. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son; and that was, (1.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it excelled them all in splendour and magnificence; Solomon built it, and yet here it is said, *God built it*, for his father had taught him, perhaps with reference to this undertaking, that *except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*, cxxvii. 1. which is a psalm for Solomon. (2.) A very stable place, like

the earth; though not to continue as long as the earth, yet, while it was to continue, it was as firm as the earth, which God *upholds by the word of his power*, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel-temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure, (lxxxix. 36, 37.) and against which the *gates of hell shall not prevail*.

3. He set a good government over them; a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart. *He chose David his servant* out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, v. 70. Concerning David, observe here,

(1.) The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor: he was bred, not a scholar, not a soldier; but a shepherd, he was *taken from the sheep-folds*, as Moses was, for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust, and to set them among princes; and some times finds those most fit for public action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation. The Son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original, *Is not this the carpenter?* David was taken, he does not say, *from leading the rams*, but *from following the ewes*, especially those great with young, which intimated, that, of all the good properties of a shepherd, he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed it; this temper of mind fitted him for government, and made him a type of Christ, who, when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, does with a particular care *gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11.

(2.) The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him to *feed Jacob his people*, v. 71. It was a great honour that God put upon him, in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him, when he was charged with the government of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne, that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself; that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they *feed the flock of God*.

(3.) The happiness of his management. David, having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord, to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it; (v. 72.) *So he fed them*, he ruled them and taught them, guided and protected them, [1.] Very honestly; he did it *according to the integrity of his heart*, aiming at nothing but the glory of God, and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with *godly sincerity, by the grace of God*. In every thing he did, he meant well, and had no by-end in view. [2.] Very discreetly; he did it *by the skilfulness of his hands*; he was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! With good reason does the psalmist make this the finishing, crowning, instance of God's favour to Israel; for David was a type of Christ, the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the *spirit of wisdom and understanding*, and should *judge and reprove with equity*.

Isa. xi. 3, 4. On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

PSALM LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woeful havoc made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it, (v. 6, 7.) and makes use of them in his prayer, *Jer.* x. 25. Some think it was penned long before, by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day. Others think that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named *Asaph*, or some other prophet, for the sons of *Asaph*. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here, I. A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, v. 1.-5. II. A petition to God for succour and relief; that their enemies might be reckoned with, (v. 6, 7, 10, 12.) that their sins might be pardoned, (v. 8, 9.) and that they might be delivered, v. 11. III. A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, v. 13. In times of the church's peace and prosperity, this psalm may, in the singing of it, give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted. But it is especially seasonable in a day of treading down and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires toward God, and the encouragement of our faith in him, as the church's Patron.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **O** GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was none to bury them*. 4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5. How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven. The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it suffers, not only *with* it, but *from* it, as a *lily among thorns*. God is complained to; whither should children go with their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who, being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Though they knew not God, nor owned him, yet God having them in a chain, the church very fitly appeals to him against them, for he is King of nations, to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and the King of saints, to favour and protect them.

I. They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

1. Against places, v. 1. They did all the mischief they could, (1.) To the holy land; they invaded that, and made inroads into it; "*The heathen are come into thine inheritance*, to plunder that, and lay it waste." Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites, as it was God's inheritance, than as it was their own; as it was the land in which God was known, and his name was great, than as it was the land in which they were bred and born, and which

they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right, nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm, as an instance of God's great favour to Israel, that he had *cast out the heathen before them*, lxxviii. 55. But see what a change sin made; now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. (2.) To the holy city; *They have laid Jerusalem on heaps*, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves, so some. The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling-places became their sepulchres, their long homes. (3.) To the holy house; that sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground; *Thy holy temple have they defiled*, by entering into it, and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

2. Against persons, against the bodies of God's people; further their malice could not reach. (1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter; (v. 3.) *Their blood have they shed like water*, wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city; whoever went out, or came in, was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood. And they shed it with no more reluctancy or regret than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when *God shall make inquisition for blood*. (2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies; when they had killed them, they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the *dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints*, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they digged up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth; or, at least, they left those so exposed, whom they slew, they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, Deut. xxi. 23. This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold; (Rev. xi. 9.) and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned, (says Austin, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. 1. cap. 12.) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted, (for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls,) but of the malice of the persecutors.

3. Against their names; (v. 4.) "*We that survive are become a reproach to our neighbours*, they all study to abuse us, and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both; upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God, and expectations from him; so that we are become a *scorn and derision to them that are round about us*." If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel-Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the *offscouring of all things*.

II. They wonder more at God's anger, v. 5. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of; *How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry?* Shall it be for ever? This intimates, that they desired no more than that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turn-

ed away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name: 7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place. 3. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low. 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. 10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, *by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.* 11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die: 12. And render unto our neighbours seven-fold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O LORD. 13. So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever; we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God, are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them, interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

1. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them, as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them; (v. 6.) "*Pour out thy wrath, the full vials of it, upon the heathen; let them wring out the dregs of it, and drink them.*" This prayer is, in effect, a prophecy, in which the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* Observe here, (1.) The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. The reason why men do not call upon God, is, because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who *live without God in the world.* There are kingdoms that know not God, and obey not the gospel, but neither their multitude, nor their force united, will secure them from his just judgments. (2.) Their crime; *they have devoured Jacob, v. 7.* That is crime enough, in the account of him, who reckons that those who touch his people, touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured, Jacob; not only encroached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but have laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. (3.) Their condemnation. "*Pour out thy wrath upon them; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done.*"

2. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray,

(1.) That God would not *remember against them their former iniquities;* (v. 8.) either their own former iniquities, that now, when they were old, they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their

youth; or the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors. In the captivity of Babylon, former iniquities were brought to account; but God promises not again to do so; (Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.) and so they pray, "Remember not against us our first sins;" which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because God said, *In the day when I visit, I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them,* Exod. xxxii. 34. If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parents' sin, they may in faith pray that God will not *remember them, against them.* When God pardons sin, he blots it out, and remembers it no more.

(2.) That he would purge away the sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled; *Deliver us, and purge away our sins, v. 9.* Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

3. They pray that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily; *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, v. 8.* They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable, that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion, and so near to desperate, that, unless divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity, "*Lord, help us; Lord, deliver us;* help us under our troubles, that we bear them well; help us out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking." Three things they plead, (1.) The great distress they were reduced to; "*We are brought very low, and, being low, shall be lost, if thou help us not.*" The lower we are brought, the more need we have of help from heaven, and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up. (2.) Their dependence upon him; "*Thou art the God of our salvation, who alone canst help; salvation belongs to the Lord, from whom we expect help, for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people.*" They who make God the God of their salvation, shall find him so. (3.) The interest of his own honour in their case; they plead no merit of theirs, they pretend to none, but, "*Help us for the glory of thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake.*" The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea. [1.] That God's name and honour would be greatly injured, if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them, blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or withdrawn and would not; therefore they plead; (v. 10.) "*Wherefore should the heathen say; Where is their God? He has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see.*" *Nil præter nubes, et cæli numen adorant.* Juv.—*They adore no other Divinity than the clouds and the sky.* That which was their praise, (That they served a God that is every where,) was now turned to their reproach and his too, as if they served a God that is no where. "Lord," say they, "Make it to appear that thou art, by making it to appear that thou art with us and for us; that when we are asked, *Where is your God?* we may be able to say, *He is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for; and you see he is so by what he doeth for us.*" [2.] That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced, if he did deliver them; his mercy would be glorified in delivering them that were so miserable

and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf, he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which, in the fulness of time, Messiah the Prince would work out, to the glory of God's name.

4. They pray that God would avenge them on their adversaries, (1.) For their cruelty and barbarity; (v. 10.) "Let the avenging of our blood" according to the ancient law, Gen. ix. 6.) "be known among the heathen; let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them are punishments of the wrong they have done to us; let this be in our sight, and by this means let God be known among the heathen, as the God to whom vengeance belongs, (xciv. 1.) and the God that espouses his people's cause." Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. (2.) For their insolence and scorn; (v. 12.) "Render to them their reproach." The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God, himself, and his name, let them be repaid to them with interest." The reproach wherewith men have reproached us only, we must leave it to God, whether he will render it to them or no, and must pray that he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself, we may in faith pray that God would render it seven-fold unto their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them, and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a prophecy of the same import with that of Enoch, That God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, (Jude xv.) and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

5. They pray that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, v. 11. The case of their brethren, who were fallen into the hands of the enemy, was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and because they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying. They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends, (1.) To the divine pity; "Let their sighs come up before thee, and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans." (2.) To the divine power; "According to the greatness of thy arm, which no creature can contest with, preserve thou those that are appointed to die, from the death to which they are appointed." Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people. See 2 Cor. i. 8-10.

Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for the answers of prayer; (v. 13.) *So we will give thee thanks for ever.* Observe, (1.) How they please themselves with their relation to God; "Though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by thee for all this; *We are thine, save us.*" (2.) How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance, which they therefore desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving, and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven. (3.) How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to *show forth his praise unto all generations*, that is, to do all they could, both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to them, and to engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise. (4.) How they plead this with God; "Lord, appear for us, against our enemies; for, if they get the better, they will *blaspheme thee*; (v. 12.) but if we be de-

livered, we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine, which thou hast *formed for thyself to show forth thy praise*; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute, be raised?" Note, These lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise are assuredly taken under his protection.

PSALM LXXX.

This psalm is much to the same purport with the foregoing. Some think it was penned upon occasion of the desolation and captivity of the *ten tribes*, as the foregoing psalm of the *two*. But many were the distresses of the Israel of God, many perhaps which are not recorded in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion for the drawing up this psalm, which is proper to be sung in the day of Jacob's trouble; and if, in singing it, we express a true love to the church, and a hearty concern for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to help it out of its greatest distresses, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here, I. Begs for the tokens of God's presence with them, and favour to them, v. 1.-3. II. He complains of the present rebukes they were under, v. 4.-7. III. He illustrates the present desolations of the church, by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard, which had flourished, but was now destroyed, v. 8.-16. IV. He concludes with prayer to God for the preparing of mercy for them, and the preparing of them for mercy, v. 17.-19. This, as many psalms before and after, relates to the public interests of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer to our hearts than any secular interest of our own.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth.
A Psalm of Asaph.

1. **G**IVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. 2. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. 3. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 4. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves. 7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, applies himself to God by prayer, with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

1. He entreats God's favour for them; (v. 1, 2.) that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe, (1.) How he eyes God in his address, as the Shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the *sheep of his pasture*, (lxxix. 13.) under whose guidance and care Israel was, as the sheep under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good Shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He *leads Joseph like a flock*, to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault. He *dwells between the cherubims*, where he is ready to receive petitions, and to give directions; the mercy-seat was between the cherubims; and it is very comfortable, in prayer, to look up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that it is so to us, is owing to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory. (2.) What he expects and desires from God; that he would give ear to the cry of their miseries, and of their

prayers; that he would shine forth both in his own glory, and in favour and kindness to his people; that he would show himself, and smile on them; that he would stir up his strength, that he would excite it, and exert it: it had seemed to slumber; "Lord, awaken it:" his cause met with great opposition, and the enemies threatened to overpower it; "Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more, and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful Help, and a present Help; Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manassah," that is, "in the sight of all the tribes of Israel, let them see it to their satisfaction." Perhaps these three tribes are named, because they were the tribes which formed that squadron of the camp of Israel that, in their march through the wilderness, followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

2. He complains of God's displeasure against them. God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, v. 4. (1.) It was great anger; he apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people; not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them; but that he was angry with their prayers, though they were his own people that prayed. That God should be angry at the sins of his people, and at the prayers of his enemies, is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people, is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them, (that he often does, in love,) but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, Jam. iv. 3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer, their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, but they lift up hands with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers, when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer; as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, *It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.* (2.) It was anger that had continued a great while; "*How long wilt thou be angry?*" We have still continued praying, and yet are still under thy frowns."

Now the tokens of God's displeasure, which they had been long under, were both their sorrow and shame. [1.] Their sorrow; (v. 5.) *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears, they eat their meat from day to day in tears, this is the vinegar in which they dipped their morsel*, xlii. 3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. [2.] It was their shame, v. 6. God, by frowning upon them, made them a strife unto their neighbours, each strove which should expose them most; and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them, that all the strife was, who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

3. He prays earnestly for converting grace, in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation; *Turn us again, O God*, v. 3. *Turn us again, O God of hosts*; (v. 7.) and then *cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved*. It is the burden of the song, for we have it again, v. 19. They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into

sinful ways, and that this was it that provoked God to hide his face from them, and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; "Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance." Observe, (1.) No salvation but from God's favour; "*Cause thy face to shine*, let us have thy love and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved." (2.) No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. (3.) No conversion to God but by his own grace: we must frame our doings to turn to him, (Hos. v. 4.) and then pray earnestly for his grace, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*, pleading that gracious promise, (Prov. i. 23.) *Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you*. The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. 16. It is burnt with fire; it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. 18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine, (v. 8, 14.) and a vineyard, v. 15. The Root of this vine is Christ, Rom. xi. 18. The branches are believers, John xv. 5. The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support, unsightly, and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent; the church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

1. How the vine of the Old Testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand, the heathen were cast out of Ca-

naam to make room for it; seven nations to make room for that one. *Thou didst sweep before it*; so some read, (v. 9.) to make clear work; the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God, having made room for it, and planted it, caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state; which was so firm, that, though their neighbours about them often attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

II. How it spread and flourished. 1. The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first, they were not so numerous as to replenish it, Exod. xxiii. 29. But in Solomon's time *Judah and Israel were many as the sand of the sea*; the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not overstocked, v. 10. The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extended themselves far, like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars. Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour. 2. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries; (v. 11.) *She sent out her boughs to the sea*, the great sea westward, and *her branches to the river*, to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather, the river Euphrates eastward, Gen. xv. 18. Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, Dan. iv. 20, 21. But it is observable here concerning this vine, that it is praised for its *shadow*, its *boughs*, and its *branches*, but not a word of its *fruit*, for *Israel was an empty vine*, Hos. x. 1. God came, looking for grapes, but beheld, wild grapes, Isa. v. 2. And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, Ezek. xv. 2, 6.

III. How it was wasted and ruined; "Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it be all undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up; but shall God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to?" v. 12. *Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?* There was a good reason for this change in God's way toward them; this noble vine was become the *degenerate plant of a strange vine*, (Jer. ii. 21.) to the reproach of its great Owner, and then no marvel if he *took away its hedge*; (Isa. v. 5.) yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. Observe, 1. The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel; as soon as ever God *brake down their hedges* and left them exposed, troops of enemies presently brake in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. They that passed by the way, plucked at them; *the bear out of the wood* and the *wild beast of the field* were ready to ravage it, v. 13. But, 2. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for till God had *broken down their hedges*, they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. The Devil could not hurt Job, so long as God continued the *hedge round about him*, Job i. 10. See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God, and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, Job v. 23. If we provoke God to withdraw, *our defence is harked from us*, and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described; (v. 16.) *It is burnt with fire, it is cut down*; the people are treated like thorns and briars, that are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished; they perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the bear, but *at the rebuke of thy countenance*; that was it which they dreaded, and to which they attributed all their

calamities. It is well or ill with us, according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

IV. What their requests were to God hereupon.

1. That God would help the vine; (v. 14, 15.) that he would graciously take cognizance of its case, and to do for it as he thought fit; "*Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts*, for thou hast seemed to go away from us. *Look down from heaven*, to which thou hast retired; from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us; that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief; from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal, and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed; thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit, to this vine. Take our woeful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the rect, which *thy right hand hath planted*, and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect; that *branch which thou madest strong for thyself*, to show forth thy praise, (Isa. xliii. 21.) that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, and therefore it may with an humble confidence be committed to thyself, and to thine own care;" *As for God, his work is perfect*. What we read the *Branch*, in the Hebrew is the *Son*, (*Ben*,) whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel; *My servant the Branch*, Zech. iii. 8. And therefore, till he was come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved and upheld, and kept in being. *He is the true Vine*, John xv. 1. Isa. xi. 1. *Destroy it not, for that a blessing is in it*, Isa. lxxv. 8.

2. That he would help the vine-dresser; (v. 17, 18.) "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand*;" that king (whoever it was) of the house of David, that was now to go in and cut before them; "let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success." We have this phrase, Ezra vii. 28. *And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me*. Their king is called the *man of God's right hand*, as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the *son of his right hand*; as he was president in their affairs, and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies, and directing them in the right way; and as he was under-shepherd under him who was the great Shepherd of Israel. Princes, who have power, must remember that they are *sons of men*, of *Adam*, so the word is; that, if they are strong, it is God that has made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men; which if they do in sincerity, *his hand shall be upon them*; and we should pray in faith that it may be so, adding this promise, that, if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him, *So will not we go back from thee*; we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouses, and is the Patron of. Let God be our Leader, and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, "Quicken us, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then *we will call upon thy name*. We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so." We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner, unless he quicken us; but it is he that puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the Protector and Saviour of the church, and the

Keeper of the vineyard. (1.) He is the Man of God's right hand, to whom he has *sworn by his right hand*, so the Chaldee; whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the Arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. (2.) He is that Son of man whom he *made strong for himself*, for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. (3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the *good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand*. (4.) The stability and constancy of believers are entirely owing to the grace and strength which are laid up for us in Jesus Christ, lxxviii. 28. In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end. Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty, let him be made able to save to the uttermost, and that will be our security; *so will not we go back from thee*.

Lastly, The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition; (v. 19.) *Turn us again*. The title given to God rises, (v. 3.) *O God*, (v. 7.) *O God of hosts*, (v. 19.) *O Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts*. When we come to God for his grace, his good will towards us, and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

PSALM LXXXI.

This psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular providence, but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new moon in general, or that of the feast of trumpets, on the new moon of the seventh month, *Lev. xxiii. 24. Numb. xxix. 1*. When David, by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service, this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day, and the observances of it, we should choose that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are, to give glory to God, and to receive instruction from God; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple: accordingly, by this psalm we are assisted, on our solemn feast-days, I. In praising God for what he is to his people, (v. 1. .3.) and has done for them, v. 4. .7. II. In teaching and admonishing one another concerning the obligations we lie under to God, (v. 8. .10.) the danger of revolting from him, (v. 11, 12.) and the happiness we should have, if we would but keep close to him, v. 13. .16. This, though spoken primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of Asaph.

1. **S**ING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast-day. 4. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt; where I heard a language that I understood not. 6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee: I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep, or to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires; work of the day, which is to be done in its day. And here,

I. The worshippers of God are excited to their work; and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, v. 1. .3. Our errand is, to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business. 1. In doing this, we must eye God as our Strength, and as the God of Jacob, v. 1. He is the Strength of Israel, as a people, for he is a God in covenant with them, who will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them, who fights their battles and makes them do valiantly and victoriously. He is the Strength of every Israelite; by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; to him, as our Strength, we must pray, and we must sing praise to him, as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. 2. We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the timbrel, harp, and psaltery; and by blowing the trumpet, some think, in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder; it was then, and is now, to be done, by singing psalms, singing aloud, and making a joyful noise. The pleasantness of the harp, and the awfulness of the trumpet, intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud, and making a noise, intimate that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God; that we must with a hearty good will show forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him, and obligations to him; and that we should join many together in this work, the more the better, it is the more like heaven. 3. This must be done in the time appointed. No time is amiss for praising God; (*Seven times a day will I praise thee; nay, at midnight will I rise and give thanks unto thee;*) but some are times appointed, not for God to meet us, (he is always ready,) but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise; when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing here his praises.

II. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the divine institution, which it is the observation of; in all religious worship we must have an eye to the command; (v. 4.) *This was a statute for Israel*, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing, which we do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do, it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution, as our warrant and rule; "This I do, because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me;" then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon those operations of Divine Providence, which it is the memorial of. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony, (v. 5.) a standing traditional evidence, for the attesting of the matters of fact. It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should be ignorant of them, and forget them.

(1.) The psalmist, in the people's name, puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Is-

rael's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, *v.* 5. When God went out against the land of Egypt, to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which perhaps is meant by the *solemn feast-day*; (*v.* 3.) that was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt, to destroy the first-born, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, *Exod.* xii. 23, 24. By it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery in Egypt, that there they heard a language that they understood not, there they were strangers in a strange land; the Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language, for Joseph spake to his brethren by an interpreter, (*Gen.* xlii. 23.) and the Egyptians are said to be, to the house of Jacob, *a people of a strange language*, *cxiv.* 1. To make a deliverance appear the more glorious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear the more grievous.

(2.) The psalmist, in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of their deliverance; here he changes the person, *v.* 6. God speaks by him, saying, *I removed his shoulder from the burthen*. Let him remember this on the feast-day, [1.] That God had brought them out of the house of bondage; had removed their shoulder from the burthen of oppression, under which they were ready to sink; had delivered their hands from the pots, or panniers, or baskets, in which they carried clay or bricks. Deliverance out of slavery is a very sensible mercy, and which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all. [2.] God had delivered them at the Red sea; then they called in trouble, and he rescued them, and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, *Exod.* xiv. 10. Then he answered them with a real answer, out of the secret place of thunder, that is, out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians, and troubled it, *Exod.* xiv. 24, 25. Or, it may be meant of the giving of the law at mount Sinai, which was the secret place, for it was death to gaze, (*Exod.* xix. 21.) and it was in thunder that God then spake. Even the terrors of Sinai were favours to Israel, *Deut.* iv. 33. [3.] God had borne their manners in the wilderness; "*I proved thee at the waters of Meribah*; thou didst there show thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee," *Selah*; Mark that; compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now, if they, on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we, on the Christian sabbath, to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers he has given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9. There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10. *I am the Lord thy God*, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11. But my people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me. 12. So

I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels. 13. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and, in them, to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

I. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say; (*v.* 8.) "*Hear, O my people*; who should hear me, if my own people will not? I have heard and answered thee; now, wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity, and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee. Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, be advised by me, be ruled by me." Nothing could be more reasonably or more justly expected, and yet God puts an *if* upon it; "*If thou wilt hearken unto me*. It is thine interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no, for thy neck is an iron sinew."

II. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God and Redeemer; (*v.* 10.) *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt*; this is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, showing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder, if we be disobedient.

III. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them as the Lord, and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt. 1. The great command was, That they should have no other gods before him; (*v.* 9.) *There shall no strange god be in thee*, none beside thine own God. Other gods might well be called *strange gods*, for it was very strange that ever any people, who had the true and living God for their God, should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, *Exod.* xxiii. 13. 2. The great promise was, That God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for, *Deut.* iv. 7. That, if they would adhere to him as their powerful Protector and Ruler, they should always find him their bountiful Benefactor. Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. See here, (1.) What is our duty; to raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires toward him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him; why therefore should we be straitened in our own bosoms? (2.) What is God's promise; I will fill thy mouth with good things, *ciii.* 5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures, (*Prov.* xiii. 21.) to replenish every hungry soul, (*Jer.* xxxi. 25.) to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit, and never satisfy; (*Isa.* lv. 2.) divine pleasures will satisfy, and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God, if we pray for it in faith; *Ask, and it shall be given you; he gives libe-*

rally, and upbraids not. God assured his people Israel, that it should be their own fault, if he did not do as great and kind things for them as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but have kept close to God. He *would moreover have given them such and such things*, 2 Sam. xii. 8.

IV. He charges them with a high contempt of his authority as their Lawgiver, and his grace and favour as their Benefactor, v. 11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain; "*My people would not hearken to my voice*, but turned a deaf ear to all I said." Two things he complains of; 1. Their disobedience to his commands; they did hear his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it, neither by the law, nor by the reason of it. 2. Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them; *They would none of me*. "They acquiesced not in my word," so the Chaldee. God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people; they did not like his terms. "I would have gathered them, but they would not." They had none of him; and why had they not? It was not because they might not, they were fairly invited into covenant with God; it was not because they could not, for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart: but it was purely because they would not. God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed; Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at nought, and *would have none of me*. Note, All the wickedness of the wicked world is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious, is, because they will not be so.

V. He justifies himself with this, in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them; (v. 12.) *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts*, which would be more dangerous enemies, and more mischievous oppressors, to them, than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will: *Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone*. It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them; for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is Debtor to no man, and yet, as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it, so he never took it away from any, but such as had first forfeited it; *They would none of me, so I gave them up*, let them take their course; and see what follows; they walked in their own counsels, in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eye, both in their worship, and in their conversations. I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God, and his advice. God therefore was not the Author of their sin, he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts, and the blood upon their own heads.

VI. He testifies his good will to them, in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts; that is worse than being given up to Satan, which may be in order to reformation, (1 Tim. i. 20.) and to salvation, 1 Cor. v. 5. But to be delivered up to our own hearts' lusts, is to be sealed under condemnation. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; what

fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to? Now, here God looks upon them with pity, and shows that it was with reluctance that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. So here, *Oh that my people had hearkened!* See Isa. xlvi. 18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem; *If thou hadst known*, Luke xix. 42. The expressions here are very affecting, (v. 13.-16.) designed to show, 1. How unwilling God is that any should perish, and desirous that all should come to repentance. He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. 2. What enemies sinners are to themselves, and what an aggravation it will be of their misery, that they might have been happy upon such easy terms.

Observe here, (1.) The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them, if they had been obedient. [1.] He would have given them victory over their enemies, and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point, against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours; (v. 14.) *I should have subdued their enemies*; and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing our enemies. Nor would he have put them to the expense and fatigue of a tedious war, he would soon have done it; for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they had not been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it, and without any difficulty; with the turn of a hand; nay, *with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked*, Isa. xi. 4. If he but turn his hand, the *haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him*; (v. 15.) and though they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him, and to confess that he is too hard for them, and that it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission. [2.] He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In despite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, their time should have endured for ever, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted, and turned out of all possession. [3.] He would have given them great plenty of all good things; (v. 16.) *He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat*, with the best grain, and best of the kind. Wheat was the staple-commodity of Canaan, and they exported a deal of it, Ezek. xxvii. 17. He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but with *honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them*. Beside the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for bee-hives, and in them they should find honey in abundance. See Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

(2.) The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more than that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions; as a servant to his master, to receive his commands; and that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his ordinances, and attend the intimations of his providence, there was nothing unreasonable in this.

(3.) Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty; If they had *hearkened to me, I would soon have*

subdued their enemies. Note, National sin and disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national salvation and deliverance. *When I would have healed Israel,* and set every thing to rights among them, then *the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered,* and so a stop was put to the cure, Hos. vii. 1. We are apt to say, "If such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies;" but we mistake; if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing had been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wishes it had been otherwise. Note, *Therefore* God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He *therefore* delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall be.

PSALM LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes' courts, and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet it was probably penned primarily for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and their other elders, who were in places of power, and perhaps by David's direction. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and to *instruct the judges of the earth*, as ii. 10. to tell them their duty, as 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, and to tell them of their faults, as lviii. 1. We have here, I. The dignity of magistracy, and its dependence upon God, v. 1. II. The duty of magistrates, v. 3, 4. III. The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, v. 2, 5. IV. Their doom read, v. 6, 7. V. The desire and prayer of all good people, that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, v. 8. Though magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding, when we give glory to God in singing it, as presiding in all public affairs, providing for the protection of injured innocence, and ready to punish the most powerful in justice, and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present government, and with the hopes of his future judgment.

A psalm of Asaph.

1. **G**OD standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. 2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. 5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here,

I. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts, asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects; (v. 1.) *God stands*, as chief Director, *in the congregation of the mighty*, the mighty One, *in cætu fortis—in the councils of the prince*, the supreme Magistrate, and he judges among the gods, the inferior magistrates; both the legislative and the executive power of princes is under his eye and his hand. Observe here, 1. The power and honour of magistrates, they are the *mighty*; they are so in authority, for the public good; it is a great power that they are intrusted with, and they ought to be mighty in wisdom and courage. They are, in the Hebrew dialect, called *gods*; the same word is used for these subordinate governors, that is used for the sovereign Ruler of the world. They are *Elohim*; angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the govern-

ment of this lower world; and magistrates, in an inferior capacity, are likewise the ministers of his providence in general, for the keeping up of order and peace in human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil doers, and protecting them that do well. Good magistrates, who answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them, they are his vicegerents, and great blessings to any people. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*, Prov. xvi. 10. But as *roaring lions, and ranging bears*, so are *wicked rulers over the poor people*, Prov. xxvi. 15. 2. A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy like ours; here is the mighty One, the Sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the *gods*. 3. God's incontestable sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations of the mighty. God stands, he judges among them; they have their power from him, and are accountable to him; *by him kings reign*. He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do, and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with for their mal-administrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them *which way soever he will*, Prov. xxi. 1. So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand, whatever devices are in men's hearts; he makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them, though their hearts little think so, Isa. x. 7. Let magistrates consider this, and be awed by it; God is with them in the judgment, 2 Chron. xix. 6. Deut. i. 17. Let subjects consider this, and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges, who mean well, are under a divine direction, and bad ones, who mean ever so ill, are under a divine restraint.

II. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to him by whom they are intrusted with it, v. 3, 4. 1. They are to be the protectors of those who lie exposed to injury, and the patrons of those who want advice and assistance. *Defend the poor*, who have no money wherewith to make friends or fee counsel, and the fatherless, who, while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost all those who would have been guides of their youth. Magistrates, as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it who are fatherless; they are called the *gods*. Herein they must be followers of him, they must be *fathers of the fatherless*. Job was so, Job xxix. 12. 2. They are to administer justice impartially, and do *right to the afflicted and needy*, who, being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them; and will be in danger of losing all, if magistrates do not, *ex officio—officially*, interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever these are that contend with him. 3. They are to rescue those who are already fallen into the hands of oppressors, and deliver them; (v. 4.) *Rid them out of the hand of the wicked, avenge them of their adversary*, Luke xviii. 3. These are clients whom there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them; yet these are they whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult, and whose cause they must espouse.

III. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, who neglect their duty, and abuse their power, for getting that God standeth among them, v. 2, 5. Observe,

1. What the sin is they are here charged with; they judge unjustly, contrary to the rules of equity

and the dictates of their consciences; giving judgment *against* those who have right on their side, out of malice and ill-will; or *for* those who have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured, and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun, when he observed *the place of judgment, that iniquity was there*, Eccl. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, though that is bad enough, but (which is much worse) they *accepted the persons of the wicked*, because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these!

2. What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor, it was many a time given them in charge, yet they judge unjustly, *for they know not, neither will they understand*. They do not care to hear their duty, they will not take pains to study it, they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice; *a gift in secret blinds their eyes*. They know not, because they will not understand; none so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do or whither they go. They that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness.

3. What were the consequences of this sin; *All the foundations of the earth*, or of the land, are out of course; when justice is perverted, what good can be expected? *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*, as the psalmist speaks in a like case, lxxv. 3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

6. I have said, *Ye are gods*; and all of you *are children of the Most High*: 7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. 8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

1. Earthly gods abased and brought down, v. 6, 7. The dignity of their character is acknowledged; (v. 6.) *I have said, ye are gods*. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods; God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words; (Exod. xxii. 28.) *Thou shalt not revile the gods*. And if they have this style from the Fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them *gods*, because *unto them the word of God came*, so our Saviour expounds it; (John x. 35.) they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, Rom. xiii. 4. All of them are in this sense *children of the most High*. God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or, “Because *I said, Ye are gods*, ye have carried the honour further than was intended, and have imagined yourselves to be the *children of the most High*,” as the king of Babylon, (Isa. xiv. 14.) *I will be like the most High*, and the king of Tyre, (Ezek. xxviii. 2.) *Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God*. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as

ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so to think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration; *Ye shall die like men*. This may be taken, either, (1.) As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their misrule put the *foundations of the earth out of course*; God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes, and their being Israelites shall not secure them, any more than their being judges; or like one of the angels that sinned; or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time; (Job xxxiv. 26.) *He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others*. Let those that abuse their power, know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly, he will *show himself above them*. Or, (2.) as the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world; let them not be puffed up with their honour, or neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality, be both mortifying to their pride, and quickening to their duty. Ye are called gods, but ye have no patent for immortality, *ye shall die like men*, like common men, and, *like one of them, ye, O princes, shall fall*. Note, Kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sceptris ligonibus aequat—Death mingles sceptres with shades*.

2. The God of heaven exalted and raised high, v. 8. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors, they turned a deaf ear to all he said, and walked on in darkness, and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to *take unto himself his great power*; *Arise, O God, judge the earth*; and, when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it; *Thou shalt inherit all nations*. This has respect, (1.) To the kingdom of providence; God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleases, he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man does of his inheritance; this we are to believe, and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much *into the hands of the wicked*, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, Job ix. 24. But God has reserved the power to himself, and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, “*Arise, O God, judge the earth*,” appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thine own heart.” There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. (2.) It has respect to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth; and that promise is pleaded, that God shall *give him the heathen for his inheritance*. Thou, O Christ, shalt *inherit all nations*, and be the Governor over them, ii. 8.—xxii. 28. Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another, in reference to the mismanagements of power among men; one is, (Rev. xix. 6.) *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*; the other is, (Rev. xxii. 20.) *Surely, I come quickly*.

PSALM LXXXIII.

This psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph. It is penned, as most of those, upon a public account, with reference to the insults of the church's enemies, who sought its ruin. Some think it was penned

upon occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah, in Jehoshaphat's time, by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of, (v. 8.) who were at the head of the alliance, and to whom all the other states here mentioned were auxiliaries. We have the story, 2 *Chron.* xx. 1. where it is said, The children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land. Others think it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the neighbouring nations against Israel, from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, I. To God's knowledge, by a presentation of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, v. 1..8. II. To God's justice and jealousy, both for his church and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, v. 9..18. This, in the singing of it, we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all antichristian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in the hope that all their projects will be baffled, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A song or psalm of Asaph.

1. **K**EEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult; and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee: 6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8. Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God were now in danger and fear, and great distress; and yet their prayer is called, *A song or psalm*, for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no, not when the harps are hung upon the willow-trees.

I. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people; (v. 1.) "*Keep not thou silence, O God, but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong.*" Thus Jehoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion; (2 *Chron.* xx. 11.) *Behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession.* Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people; he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it, or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by as *a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save.* Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, "*Keep not thou silence, O God. Lord, speak to us by thy prophets, for our encouragement against our fears;*" (as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 *Chron.* xx. 14, &c.) "*Lord, speak for us by thy providence, and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us, and disappointment to them.*" God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

II. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbouring nations against Israel,

which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of.

Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed; it is against the Israel of God, and so, in effect, against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting but that, if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it to appear that he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; for who then could be against them? "*Lord,*" says he, "*they are thine enemies, and they hate thee.*" All wicked people are God's enemies, (the *carnal mind is enmity against God*;) but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion, and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them—that they fought against God; *They are confederate against thee*, v. 5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it, but when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, *Help, Lord! Keep not thou silence, O God.* He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me, that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and ruin my estate. "*Lord,*" says the psalmist, "*they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones.*" Note, God's people are his hidden ones; hidden, (1.) In respect of secrecy; their life is *hid with Christ in God*; the *world knows them not*; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. (2.) In respect of safety; God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power, and promise to secure his people, they will consult, and ruin them, and *cast them down from their excellency*, (1xii. 4.) and so make a prey of those whom the *Lord has set apart for himself*, iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed; the Devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on, (1.) With a great deal of heat and violence; *Thine enemies make a tumult*, v. 2. *The heathen rage*, ii. 1. *The nations are angry*, Rev. xi. 18. They are noisy in their clamours against the people, whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies; this comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: "*The enemies talk big, and talk much; Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath.*" ii. 5. (2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence; They have lifted up the head; in confidence of their success, they are so elevated, as if they could overtop the Most High, and overpower the Almighty. (3.) With a great deal of art and policy; They have *taken crafty counsel*, v. 3. The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive, by all possible means, though ever so base, ever so bad, to gain their point. They are *profound to make slaughter*, (Hos. v. 2.) as if they could outwit Infinite Wisdom. (4.) With a great deal of unanimity; whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God they *consult with one consent*, (v. 5.) nor is *Satan's kingdom divided against itself*. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Pas est et ab hoste doceri—Even an enemy may instruct.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may

join in crucifying Christ, surely Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What it is that is aimed at in this confederacy; they consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which had been their wisdom: they consult, not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms; not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exorbitant; this will not serve; it is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that they design: (v. 4.) "*Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, no not in history;*" for with them they would destroy their Bibles, and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. It is the secret wish of wicked men, that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind; having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it; all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it, cut off; this they would bring it to, if it were in their power; but *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them.*

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy; the nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned, (v. 6.-8.) the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van, for the apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong, but the spirit of persecution has broken through them; *The brother shall betray the brother to death.* Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but as an incestuous, so a degenerate, race. The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious; how the inhabitants of Tyre, who, in David's time, were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not, but that Assur, that is, the Assyrian, also is joined with them, is not strange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; *Lord, how are they increased that trouble it!* God's heritage was a speckled bird, all the birds round about were against her; (Jer. xii. 9.) which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world, in despite of the combined force of earth and hell.

9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon; 10. Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah and Zalmunna: 12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. 13. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, 15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid

with thy storm. 16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. 17. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: 18. That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and, in God's name, foretells it; for this, prayer, that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so; and this prophecy reaches to all the enemies of the gospel-church; whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom.

The prayer is, in short, that these enemies, who were confederate against Israel, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated,

I. By some precedents; let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have formerly set themselves against God's Israel. The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope; because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness.

1. He prays that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been; (v. 9, 10.) *Do to them as to the Midianites;* let them be routed by their own fears; for so the Midianites were, more than by Gideon's 300 men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera, who was general under Jabin king of Canaan, which God discomfited (Judg. iv. 15.) at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor; they became as dung on the earth, their dead bodies were thrown like dung, laid in heaps, or spread, to fatten the ground; they were trodden to dirt by Barak's small, but victorious, army; and this was fitly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to aftertimes when it was fresh; (Judg. v. 31.) *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord,* that is, So they shall perish.

2. He prays that their leaders might be destroyed as they had been formerly; the common people would not have been so mischievous, if their princes had not set them on, and therefore they are particularly prayed against, v. 11, 12. Observe, (1.) What their malice was against the Israel of God; they said, *Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession,* (v. 12.) *the pleasant places of God,* so the word is, by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land, and was Immanuel's land; or, the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place; (Isa. lxiv. 11.) or, (as Dr. Hammond suggests,) the pleasant pastures, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did, in a particular manner, seek after. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their armies must be made as dung for the earth, to serve their covetousness and their ambition. (2.) What their lot should be; they shall be made like Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites, and slain; (Judg. vii. 25.) and, like Zeba and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himself slew, Judg. viii. 21. "Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us, as they were to the conquerors then." We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God that he will deal

with the enemies of his church in our days, as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

II. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays,

1. That God would make them like a wheel, (v. 13.) that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy, in all their counsels and resolves; that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin. Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out, by the wheel which was then used in threshing. Thus, when a *wise king scattereth the wicked*, he is said to *bring the wheel over them*, Prov. xx. 26. They that trust in God have their hearts fixed; they that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel.

2. That they might be chased as stubble, or chaff, before the fierce wind. The wheel, though it continually turn round, is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no more fixation than the light stubble has, which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, but is willing it should go, Ps. i. 4. Thus shall *the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chased out of the world*.

3. That they might be consumed, as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains, by the flames, v. 14. When the stubble is driven by the wind, it will rest, at last, under some hedge, in some ditch or other; but he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, (Heb. vi. 8.) and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The reddition of these comparisons we have; (v. 15.) *So persecute them with thy tempest*, persecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy storm. See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raises terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable. God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bid defiance to his justice, and can make him afraid as a grasshopper. It is the torment of devils, that they tremble.

III. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, v. 16-18. He prays here that God, having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that they might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God, (Isa. xxvi. 11.) ashamed of their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself, and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame, but the shame will, at length, return upon themselves.

Now, 1. The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion; "Let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, *that they may seek thy name, O Lord*. Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against, and what an unequal match they are for him, and may, therefore, humble and submit themselves, and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to *fear thy name*, and perhaps that will bring them to *seek thy name*." Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors, is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this; no other confusion to them, than what may be a step toward their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God; if they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame and perish; if they will not be troubled and turned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, *let them be troubled for ever*, and never have peace; this will be for God's glory; (v. 18.) that other men may know and own, if they themselves will not,

that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, (that incommunicable, though not ineffable, name,) *art the Most High over all the earth*. God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies, will be incontestable proofs, (1.) That he is, according to his name JEHOVAH, a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, that has all power and perfection in himself. (2.) That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themselves, and pretend to be high. (3.) That he is so, not only over the land of Israel, but over all the earth, even those nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom rules over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies, in the great day, will be the effectual proof of this, before angels and men; when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise, (Dan. xii. 2.) shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

PSALM LXXXIV.

Though David's name be not in the title of this psalm, yet we have reason to think he was the penman of it, because it breathes so much of his excellent spirit, and is so like to the 63d psalm, which was penned by him; it is supposed that David penned this psalm when he was forced, by Absalom's rebellion, to quit his city, which he lamented his absence from, not so much because it was the royal city, as because it was the holy city, witness this psalm, which contains the pious breathings of a gracious soul after God, and communion with him. Though it be not entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon as, a psalm or song for the sabbath-day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here with great devotion expresses his affection, I. To the ordinances of God; his value for them, (v. 1.) his desire toward them, (v. 2, 3.) his conviction of the happiness of those that did enjoy them, (v. 4. 7.) and his placing of his own happiness so very much in the enjoyment of them, v. 10. II. To the God of the ordinances: his desire toward him, (v. 8, 9.) his faith in him, (v. 11.) and his conviction of the happiness of those that put their confidence in him, v. 12. In singing this psalm, we should have the same devout affections working toward God, that David had, and then the singing of it will be very pleasant.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**OW amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. 5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, 6. Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools. 7. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The psalmist here, being by force restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe,

I. The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institu

tions; (v. 1.) *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* Some think that he here calls God the *Lord of hosts*, that is, in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts, because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary; they attended the Shechinah, and were (as some think) signified by the cherubim; God is the Lord of these hosts, and his tabernacle is: it is spoken of as more than one, (*thy tabernacles*), because there were divers courts in which the people attended, and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place, and a most holy. How amiable are these! How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful, an inexpressible, beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable, for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

II. The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, v. 2. It was an entire desire; body, soul, and spirit, concurred in it, he was not conscious to himself of any rising thought to the contrary; it was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the ambitious, or covetous, or voluptuous. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be restored to his place in God's courts, and almost impatient of delay. Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out, in prayer, for the living God himself. Oh that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him! 1 John i. 3. Ordinances are empty things, if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

III. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars, v. 3. This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affection to God's altars; *The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself.* These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose, and in which to lay their young; some such David supposes there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wishes himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars, than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly into the wilderness; (iv. 6.) here for the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and, though to watch as a sparrow alone upon the housetop, is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit, (cii. 7.) yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars. It is better to be serving God in solitude, than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps, when, in David's time, music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the harmony, they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle, (for we find the singing of birds taken notice of to the glory of God, civ. 12.) and David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there; David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night, but let this be his rest, his home, here he will dwell. And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but that there they lay their young; for those who have a place in God's courts themselves, cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's

house, and within his walls, a place and a name, that they may *feed their kids beside the shepherd's tents.* Some give another sense of this verse; "Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse; but thine altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, which I am desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? *As a bird that wanders from her nest*, so am I, now that I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place; (Prov. xxvii. 8.) I shall never be easy till I return to my place again." Note, They whose souls are at home, at rest, in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense, and David, in his desire of a place in God's courts, has an eye to both, as we also must, in all our attendance on God, have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ. And, lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address; Thou art the *Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.* Where should a poor distressed subject seek for protection but with his king? *And should not a people seek unto their God?* My King, my God, is Lord of hosts; by him and his altars let me live and die.

IV. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars; "*Blessed are they; oh when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?*"

1. Blessed are the ministers; the priests and Levites, who have their residence about the tabernacle, and are, in their courses, employed in the service of it; (v. 4.) *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, that are at home there, and whose business lies there.* He is so far from pitying them as confined to a constant attendance, and obliged to perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world. There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesses the religious. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;* (not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work;) *they will be still praising thee;* and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising him. Apply this to his house above; blessed are they that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day or night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country, who, though they do not constantly dwell in God's house, as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance; Deut. xvi. 16. David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and a hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those who might thus attend, v. 5-7.

Those whom he pronounces blessed, are here described;

(1.) They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God, and devotedness to him; *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee*, who makes thee his Strength, and strongly stays himself upon thee; who makes thy name his strong Tower, into which he runs for safety, Prov. xviii. 10. *Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God*, Ps. xl. 4.—cxlvi. 5. Those are truly happy, who go forth, and go on, in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, (for then the work is sure to miscarry,) but in the strength of the

grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering.

(2.) They are such as have a love for holy ordinances, in *whose heart are the ways of them*, that is, who, having placed their happiness in God as their End, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened, and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts; no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those who have the new Jerusalem in their eye, must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's word our rule, and walk by it.

(3.) They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements, in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, *v. 6.* When they came up out of the country to worship at the feasts, their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley, (so some,) in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but, to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment. When they make the pools, the rain of heaven fills them; if we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times; their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is, as others understand it, many watery vallies, which, in wet weather, when *the rain filled the pools*, either through the rising of the waters, or through the dirtiness of the way, were unpassable; but, by draining and trenching them, they made a road through them for the benefit of those who went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to show, [1.] That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make those an excuse for staying at home. Difficulties in the way of duty are designed to try our resolution; and *he that observes the wind shall not sow.* [2.] That they made the best of the way to Zion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and bore, as well as they could, the inconveniences that could not be removed. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that way may be made a well, if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

(4.) They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end, at length, and do not take up short of it; (*v. 7.*) *They go from strength to strength*; their company increases by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous; those that were near staid till those that were further off called on them, saying, *Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord;* (cxix. 1, 2.) that they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or, the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey, and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem, were the more lively and cheerful, and so went *stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 9. Thus it is promised that they that *wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength*, Isa. xl. 31. Even where they are weak, there they are strong. They go *from virtue to virtue*; (so some;) it is the same word that is used

for the virtuous woman; they that press forward in their Christian course, shall find God adding grace to their graces, John i. 16. They shall be changed from glory to glory, (2 Cor. iii. 18.) from one degree of glorious grace to another; till, at length, *every one of them appears before God in Zion*, to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. Note, They who grow in grace, shall, at last, be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, *They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion.* We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; which, if we do, the benefit of it will appear, to God's glory, and our own everlasting comfort.

8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9. Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Here,

I. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him; he needed to say no more, when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and banished from; all his desire was, in that profession, plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning, were not hid from him; therefore he prays, (*v. 8, 9.*) only that God would hear his prayer, and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had toward God's courts; he calls himself (as many think) *God's anointed*, for David was anointed by him, and anointed for him. In this petition, 1. He has an eye to God, under several of his glorious titles. As *the Lord God of hosts*, who has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth; as *the God of Jacob*, a God in covenant with his own people, a God who never said to the praying seed of Jacob, *Seek ye me, in vain*; and as *God our Shield*, who takes his people under special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father, (Gen. xv. 1.) *Fear not, Abraham, I am thy Shield.* When David could not be hid in the secret of God's tabernacle, (Ps. cxvii. 5.) being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his Shield ready to him, wherever he was. 2. He has an eye to the Mediator; for of him I rather understand those words, *Look upon the face of thy Messiah*, thine Anointed One; for of his anointing David spake, xlv. 7. In all our addresses to God, we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well-pleased with us in him; we must look with an eye of faith, and then God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the Anointed, who does show his face, when we, without him, dare not show ours.

II. He pleads his love to God's ordinances, and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, *v. 10.* A very great regard he had for holy ordinances, he valued

them above any thing else, and he expresses his value for them, (1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time; *A day spent in thy courts*, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, *is better than a thousand*, not than a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in this world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. Better than a thousand, he does not say *days*, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it. "A day in thy courts, a sabbath-day, a holy-day, a feast-day, though but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay," (as some of the rabbins paraphrase it,) "though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall, with its pleasure, *chase a thousand*, and *two put ten thousand to flight*, to shame, as not worthy to be compared." (2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place; *I had rather be a door-keeper*, rather be in the meanest place and office, *in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness*. Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a *house*, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than a palace, and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant-interest he had in God as his God, was the sweet string on which he loved dearly to be harping; they, and they only, who can, upon good ground, call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house, than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns; rather lie at the threshold, so the word is; that was the beggar's place, Acts iii. 2. "No matter," (says David,) "let that be my place rather than none." The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there, (Matth. xxiii. 6.) that they might make a figure; holy David is not solicitous about that, if he may but be admitted to the threshold, he will say, *Master, it is good to be here*. Some read it, *I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness*, alluding to the law concerning servants, who, if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Exod. xxi. 5, 6. David loved his master, and loved his work, so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his Hope, and Joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, v. 11. See (1.) What God is, and will be, to his people. *The Lord God is a Sun and Shield*; we are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a Sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us; we are here in danger, but he will be to us a Shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us; *with his favour he will compass us as with a shield*. Let us therefore always *walk in the light of the Lord*, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a Sun to supply us with all good, and a Shield to shelter us from all evil. (2.) What he does, and will, bestow upon them; *The Lord will give grace and glory*. Grace signifies both the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are

God's gift, his free gift. And as, on the one hand, wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it,) so, on the other hand, he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he does not give grace now, or who receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that *no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly*. (3.) It is the character of all good people, that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold *no good thing from them*, that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world; make sure grace and glory and other things *shall be added*; this is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that, whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure, that, either Infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them, or Infinite Goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly, He pronounces them blessed, who put their confidence in God, as he did, v. 12. They are blessed, who have the liberty of ordinances, and the privileges of God's house. But though we should be debarr'd from them, yet we are not therefore debarr'd from blessedness, if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

PSALM LXXXV.

Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of. And nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then, as well as Ps. cxxxvii. They are the public interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge; above were clouds, below were waves, every thing was dark and dismal; the church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear; being so, I. Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions are, against sin and wrath, (v. 4.) and for mercy and grace, v. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours, (v. 1. 3.) and present distresses, v. 5, 6, 11. Here is the dove returning with an olive-branch of peace and good tidings; the psalmist expects her return, (v. 8.) and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which, by the spirit of prophecy, he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith, he took the assurance of to himself, v. 9. 13. In singing this psalm, we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general, and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires; the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **L**ORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger. 4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6. Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may re-

joy in thee? 7. Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

The church, in affliction and distress, is here, by direction from God, making her application to God; so ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people, that, by his Spirit in the word, and in the heart, he indites their petitions, and puts words into their mouths. The people of God, in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

I. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them; (v. 1-3.) "Thou hast done so and so for us and our fathers." Note, The sense of present affliction should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but even then when we are brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of, with thankfulness, to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure, 1. That God had showed himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own; "*Thou hast been favourable to thy land*, as thine, with distinguishing favours." Note, The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness, to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got, and kept possession of, Canaan; (xlii. 3.) and if he had not continued very favourable to them, they had been ruined many a time. 2. That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies, and restored them to their liberty; "*Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob*, and settled those in their own land again, that had been driven out, and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors." The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. 3. That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocation; (v. 2.) "*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people*, and not punished them as in justice thou mightest. *Thou hast covered all their sin*." When God forgives sin he covers it; and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. 4. That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long, as they had reason to fear; (v. 3.) "*Having covered all their sin, thou hast taken away all thy wrath*;" for when sin is set aside, God's anger ceases; God is pacified, if we are purified. See what the pardon of sin is; "*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people*, that is, "*Thou hast turned thine anger from waxing hot*, so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us, thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath; but, when an intercessor has stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned away thine anger."

II. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former; "Thou hast done well for our fathers; do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant. 1. They pray for converting grace; "*Turn us, O God of our salvation*, in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned. All those whom God will save, sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation. 2. They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under; "*Cause thine anger towards us to cease*, as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them." Observe the method, "First turn us to thee, and then cause thine anger to turn from us." When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being recon-

ciled to us. 3. They pray for the manifestation of God's good will to them; (v. 7.) "*Show us thy mercy, O Lord*; show thyself merciful to us: not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us." 4. They pray that God would, graciously to them, and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf; "*Grant us thy salvation*: grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence." Note, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation; he shows mercy to those to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of mere mercy.

III. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, v. 5, 6. Where observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate; "*Wilt thou be angry with us for ever*? We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. *Wilt thou draw out thine anger unto all generations*? No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to show mercy, and wilt not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for, what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a hell upon earth be the lot of thy people?" 2. What they desire and hope for; "*Wilt thou not revive us again*; (v. 6.) revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us? Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again?" God had granted to the children of the captivity some reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8. Their return out of Babylon was as life from the dead, Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12. Now, Lord, (say they,) *wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in*? Isa. xi. 11. Ps. cxxvi. 1, 4. *Revive thy work in the midst of the years*, Hab. iii. 2. "Revive us again," (1.) "That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of it," Ps. xiv. 7. Give them life, that they may have joy. (2.) "That they may rejoice in thee; and so thou wilt have the glory of it." If God be the Fountain of all our mercies, he must be the Centre of all our joys.

8. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good: and our land shall yield her increase. 13. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and expostulations in the foregoing verses.

I. In general, it is an answer of peace; this the psalmist is soon aware of, (v. 8.) for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, (Hab. ii. 1, 2.) *I will hear what God the Lord will speak*. This intimates, 1. The stilling of his passions, his grief, his fear, and the tumult of his spirit; "Compose thyself, O my soul, in an humble silence to attend upon God, and

wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will; *What saith my Lord unto his servant?*" If we would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he says to us by his word. 2. The raising of his expectations; now that he has been at prayer, he looks for something very great, and very kind, from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed, we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now, observe here, (1.) What it is that he promises himself from God, in answer to his prayers; *He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints.* There are a people in the world who are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and who shall be saved by him. All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings, and within are fears; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit, which he has spoken to their ears by his word and ministers, and making them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) What use he makes of this expectation. [1.] He takes the comfort of it; and so must we; "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak,*" hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer." When God speaks peace, we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. [2.] He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for; *But let them not turn again to folly;* for it is on these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected. To these, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but if they return to it again, it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God has spoken peace; God is for peace, but, when he speaks, such are for war.

II. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace; he doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the five last verses of the psalm, which describes the peace and prosperity that God, at length, blessed the children of the captivity with, when, after a great deal of toil and agitation, at length they gained a settlement in their own land. But it may be taken, 1. As a promise also to all who fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy and happy. 2. As a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

(1.) Help at hand; (v. 9.) "*Surely his salvation is nigh,*" nigh to us, nigher than we think it is; it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time is come, and that time is not far off." When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh to all who fear him; when trouble is nigh, salvation is nigh; for God is a very present Help in time of trouble to all who are his; whereas *salvation is far from the wicked,* exix. 155. This may fitly be applied to Christ the Author of eternal salvation: it was the comfort of the Old Testament saints, that though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome, to all that fear God.

(2.) Honour secured; "*That glory may dwell in our land,*" that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, *Ichabod—the glory is departed;* when that stays, glory dwells." This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the Glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt

among them, (John i. 4.) for which reason their land is called *Immanuel's land*, Isa. viii. 8.

(3.) Graces meeting, and happily embracing; (v. 10, 11.) *Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other.* This may be understood, [1.] Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which all these graces should be conspicuous and commanding.

The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable; when there is no truth nor mercy, all goes to ruin, Hos. iv. 1. Isa. lix. 14, 15. But when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth, that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness, that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congress mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people. [2.] Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it thereupon. When a people return to God, and adhere to him, in a way of duty, he will return to them, and abide with them, in a way of mercy. So some understand this, Man's truth, and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God finds us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful. If we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace. If *truth spring out of the earth*, that is, (as Dr. Hammond expounds it,) out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness, God's mercy, shall look down from heaven, as the sun does upon the world, when it sheds its influence on the productions of the earth, and cherishes them.

[3.] Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him, who is both our Salvation and our Glory, *mercy and truth are met together;* God's mercy and truth, and his *righteousness and peace, have kissed each other;* that is, the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them, without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners, and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ, as Mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him *truth springs out of the earth*, that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then *righteousness looks down from heaven*, for God is just, and the Justifier of them which believe in Jesus; or it may denote, that, in the kingdom of the Messiah, these graces shall flourish and prevail, and have a universal command.

(4.) Great plenty of every thing desirable; (v. 12.) *The Lord shall give that which is good,* every thing that he sees to be good for us; all good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness, have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected; if we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added; Matth. vi. 33. When the glory of the gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for soul-prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it, or sweeten the want of it. See Ps. lxxvii. 6.

(5.) A sure guidance in the good way; (v. 13.) *The righteousness of his promise* which he has made to us, assuring us of happiness—the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour, and to qualify us for it; and this shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, that is, to encourage our hopes, and guide our

practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shall bring us to God, and put us into the way that leads to him; John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ, to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God, and in following him.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm is entitled *a prayer of David*; probably it was not penned upon any particular occasion, but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, who in the days of his flesh *offered up strong cries*, *Heb. v. 7.* David, in this prayer, (according to the nature of that duty,) I. Gives glory to God, *v. 8.-10, 12, 13.* II. Seeks for grace and favour from God; that God would hear his prayers, (*v. 1, 6, 7.*) preserve and save him, and be merciful to him; (*v. 2, 3, 16.*) that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, *v. 4, 11, 17.* He pleads God's goodness, (*v. 5, 15.*) and the malice of his enemies, *v. 14.* In singing this, we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.

A prayer of David.

1. **B**OW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me; for I *am* poor and needy. 2. Preserve my soul, for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3. Be merciful unto me, O LORD: for I cry unto thee daily. 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 5. For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plentiful in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of *a prayer of David*: not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.

Now here we may observe,

I. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described, (*v. 4.*) *Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul*, as he had said, *xxv. 1.* In all parts of prayer, the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation raised very high of great things from him.

1. He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers; (*v. 1.*) *Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me.* When God hears our prayers, it is fitly said that he *bows down his ear* to them, for it is admirable condescension in God that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are, and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again; (*v. 6.*) *"Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered, attend to the voice of my supplications."* Not that God needs to have his affections stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spake it with assurance

and pleasure; (*John xi. 41, 42.*) *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always.*

2. He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the Author of his salvation; (*v. 2.*) *Preserve my soul, save thy servant.* It was David's soul that was God's servant; for these only serve God acceptably that *serve him with their spirits.* David's concern is about his soul; if we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us, That the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping, and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our Preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life; the life of the soul as distinct from the body; "Preserve my soul from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, from sin; preserve my soul, and so save me." All those whom God will save he does preserve, and will, to his heavenly kingdom.

3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion; (*v. 3.*) *Be merciful to me, O LORD.* It is mercy in God to pardon our sins, and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, *God be merciful to me.* "Men show no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, LORD, for mercy sake, be merciful unto me."

4. He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort; (*v. 4.*) *Rejoice the soul of thy servant.* It is God only that can *put gladness into the heart, and make the soul to rejoice*, and then, and not till then, the joy is full: as it is the duty of those who are God's servants to *serve him with gladness*, so it is their privilege to be *filled with joy and peace in believing*; and they may in faith pray, not only that God will *preserve* their souls, but that he will *rejoice* their souls, and the *joy of the LORD* will be their strength. Observe, When he prays, *Rejoice my soul*, he adds, *For unto thee do I lift up my soul.* Then we may expect comfort from God, when we take care to keep up our communion with God; prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

II. The pleas with which he enforces these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him; "Thou art my God, to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant, (*v. 2.*) in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee."

2. He pleads distress; "*Hear me, for I am poor and needy*, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me." God is the poor man's King, whose glory it is to *save the souls of the needy*; they who are poor in spirit, who see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him; (*v. 5.*) "To thee do I *lift up my soul* in desire and expectation; *for thou, LORD, art good*;" and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good housekeeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all our addresses to him. His goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving. (1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is ready to forgive; more ready to forgive than we are to repent. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest*, *xxxii. 5.* (2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plentiful in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto all them that call upon him; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs, and is open-handed in granting that supply.

4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as earnest of all good.

(1.) A conformity to God; (v. 2.) *I am holy*, therefore preserve my soul; for these whom the Spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He does not say this in pride and vain-glory, but with humble thankfulness to God; *I am one whom thou favourest*, so the margin reads it, whom thou hast set apart for thyself; if God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that *the time was a time of love; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*; and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. *All his saints are in thy hand*, Deut. xxxiii. 3. Observe, *I am needy*, (v. 1.) yet *I am holy*; (v. 2.) holy and yet needy; *poor in the world, but rich in faith*. Those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

(2.) A confidence in God; *Save thy servant that trusteth in thee*. They that are holy must, nevertheless, not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

(3.) A disposition to communion with God; he hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. [1.] To be constant in prayer; *I cry unto thee daily, and all the day*, v. 3. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard, which we make in time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. [2.] To be inward with God in prayer; to *lift up his soul to him*, v. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. [3.] To be, in a special manner, earnest with God in prayer, when he was in affliction; (v. 7.) *"In the day of my trouble, whatever others do, I will call upon thee, and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, O Baal, hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded,"* 1 Kings xviii. 29.

8. Among the gods *there is none like unto thee, O LORD*; neither *are there any works like unto thy works*. 9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O LORD; and shall glorify thy name. 10. For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone. 11. Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12. I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13. For great *is* thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set thee before them. 15. But thou, O LORD, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me: give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid. 17. Show me a token for good; that they which hate me

may see it, and be ashamed; because thou LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

1. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

1. As a being of unparalleled perfection, such a one, that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, v. 8. Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, *there is none like unto thee, O LORD*; none so wise, so mighty, so good; *neither are there any works like unto thy works*: which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him, is, by acknowledging that there is none like him.

2. As the Fountain of all being, and the Centre of all praise; (v. 9.) *"Thou hast made all nations, made them all of one blood, they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name."* This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Rev. vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore, through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to *worship before God*, Isa. lxxvi. 23.

3. As a Being infinitely great; (v. 10.) *"Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and, for the proof of this, thou doest wondrous things, which all nations admire, and whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none beside thee."* Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admiration of this God who doeth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts, who is God alone.

4. As a Being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile; (v. 14.) no mercy is to be expected from him; but thou, O LORD, *art a God full of compassion, and gracious*, v. 15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort, in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that, however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger, and he is *plenteous in mercy and truth*, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

5. As a kind Friend and bountiful Benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly, when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist dwells upon with most pleasure, v. 12, 13. He had said, (v. 9.) *All nations shall praise thee, O LORD, and glorify thy name*. It is some satisfaction to a good man, to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. "Whatever others do," (says David,) *"I will praise thee, O LORD my God, not only as*

the Lord, but as my God; and I will do it with all mine heart; I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for *I will glorify thy name*, not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity." With good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had showed him particular favours; *For great is thy mercy toward me*.

The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full, the streams of mercy are inestimably rich; when we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it, *Great is thy mercy toward me*. Of the greatness of God's mercy, he gives this instance, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell*; from death, from so great a death, as St. Paul, (2 Cor. i. 10.) from eternal death, so even some of the Jewish writers understand it. David knew he deserved to have been cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him that the Lord had *taken away his sin*; and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and herein God's mercy was great toward him. Even the best saints owe it, not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell: and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious, a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

II. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him; (v. 14.) "Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me." He then takes notice of their character; they were proud men, that looked with disdain upon poor David. (Many are made persecutors by their pride.) They were violent men, that would carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they were terrible, formidable, men, (so some,) that did what they could to frighten all about them. He notices their number; there are assemblies of them, they were men in authority, and met in councils and courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs. But, being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. He notices their enmity to David: "They rise up against me in open rebellion; they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him; they seek after my life to slay me, after my soul to damn me, if it lay in their power." And, *lastly*, He notices their distance and estrangement from God, which were at the bottom of their enmity to David; "They have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine."

His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, v. 11. He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty; "Teach me thy way, O Lord, the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in; when I am in doubt concerning it, make it plain to me what I should do, let me hear thy voice, saying, *This is the way*," Isa. xxx. 21. David was well-taught in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment; *Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth*. One would think it should be, *Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way*; but it comes all to one, it is the way of truth that God teaches, and that we must choose and walk in, Ps. cxix. 30. Christ is the Way and

the Truth, and we must both learn Christ and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth, unless he teach us; and, if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, Isa. ii. 3. (2.) An upright heart; "Unite my heart to fear thy name; make me sincere in religion; a hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided between him and the world; not straggling from him." Our hearts are apt to wander, and hang loose; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foreign things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. "Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him, that is an united heart."

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, v. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for, (1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him; "O turn unto me, as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for; my enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, and have mercy upon me; it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me." (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety; "Give me thy strength; put strength into me, that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin." He pleads relation; "I am thy servant; I am so by birth, as the son of thine hand-maid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful Owner and Proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. *I am thine, save me*." The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put reputation on him; "Show me a token for good; make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good, and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be, when they perceive that thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me; and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort." The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an eulogium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel-church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion, for the temple's sake, is here preferred, 1. Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favour, v. 1. 3. II. Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of divine blessings, v. 4. 7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state; others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt, after the captivity; though no man cared for her; (Jer. xxx. 17.) *This is Zion whom no man seeketh after*; yet God had done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her, which should all have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church; to that therefore we must have an eye, in singing this psalm.

A psalm or song for the sons of Korah.

1. **THIS** foundation is in the holy mountains. 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings

of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song, whose subject is the holy mountains; the temple built in Zion upon mount Moriah. That is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or, we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of; every one knew what he meant when he had said thus abruptly, *Its foundation is in the holy mountains.*

Three things are here observed, in praise of the temple.

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, *v.* 1. The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter; Christ himself is the Foundation of it, which God has laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains; it is built high, the *mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains*, Isa. ii. 2. It is built firm; the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas; (*xxiv.* 2.) which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, Isa. liv. 10. The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church, that is it which will support it, and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon *holy mountains*; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he has sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

(2.) That God had expressed a particular affection for it; (*v.* 2.) *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion*, of the temple, of the houses of doctrine, (so the Chaldee,) *more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell*; there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and showed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, (1.) God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family-worship. (2.) Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all, of the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family-duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet, when they come in competition, public worship (*cæteris paribus*—*other things being equal*) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God; (*v.* 3.) *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God*. We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make, and the estimate put upon them, in and by the scripture. Many base things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, glorious things are spoken of it; God said of the temple, *Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually; I have sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever*, 2 Chron. vii. 16. *Beautiful for situation is mount Zion*, Ps. xlviii. 2.

These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel-church; it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood, it is a *peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned ever so much to our reproach, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one *iota* or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me; behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: this man was born there. 5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her. 6. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. 7. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

Zion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned that other places have their glories; (*v.* 4.) *"I will make mention of Rahab,"* that is, *"Egypt, and Babylon, to them that know me,* and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia," or rather Arabia; we shall observe that this man was born there; here and there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue, may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a proselyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it; that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and of uniting them in one body with the Jews. God says, *"I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with them that know me.* I will reckon them my people as much as Israel, when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Zion, born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Zion as freely as a true-born Israelite." They that were strangers and foreigners, become *fellow citizens with the saints*, Eph. ii. 19. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare Isa. xix. 23-25. *The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all, upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Zion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, *v.* 5. Of Zion it shall be said by all her neighbours, that *this and that man was born in her*, many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings, who should be greater favourites of Heaven, and greater blessings to the earth, than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceeded those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. *A man, a man was born in her*; by which some understand Christ, that Man, that Son of man, who is firmer than the children of men, he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the Glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation, was, that of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, Rom. ix. 5. Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gen-

tiles; Of Zion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Zion, the gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of proselytes out of divers nations, shall be so far from occasioning discord and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Zion's strength; for God himself, having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

(3.) Zion's sons shall be registered with honour; (v. 6.) *The Lord shall count, when he writes up, the people*, and takes a catalogue of his subjects, *that this man was born there*, and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house—by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit. When God comes to return with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service, of God, Rom. ix. 4.—iii. 1, 2. For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly; five talents must be improved by those that were intrusted with five. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, and where thou wast born. Selah. Let those that dwell in Zion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. As well the singers, as the players on instruments, shall be there to praise God, v. 7. It was much to the honour of Zion, and is to the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing; his work is done, and done cheerfully; see lxviii. 25. *All my springs are in thee*, O Zion: so God says; he has deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances, there are the springs from which those streams take rise, *which make glad the city of our God*, xlv. 4. So the psalmist says, reckoning the springs, from which his dry soul must be watered, to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints; the springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true Temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; it pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fulness dwell.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation; one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not conclude, as usually the melancholy psalms do, with the least intimation of comfort or joy, but, from first to last, it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains, (here is no mention of the afflictions of the church,) but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion from our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm, we have, I. The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, v. 3.-6. II. The wrath of God, which was the cause of that pressure, v. 7, 15.-17. III. The wickedness of his friends, v. 8, 18. IV. The application he made to God by prayer, v. 1, 2, 9, 13. V. His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, v. 10, 12, 14. Those

who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly; those that are not ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A song or psalm for the sons of Korah. To the chief musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1. **O** LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength: 5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am shut up*, and I cannot come forth. 9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee; I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem, by the titles of this and the following psalm, that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two of these names, who were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, (1 Kings iv. 31.) where, to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be *wiser than Heman and Ethan*. Whether the Heman and Ethan, who were Levites and preceptors in the songs of Zion, were the same, we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these, were the penmen of these psalms; there was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called *the king's seer or prophet*, in the words of God; (1 Chron. xxv. 5.) it is probable that this also was a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him.

The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but, before he begins his complaint, he calls God *the God of his salvation*, which intimates, both that he looked for salvation, bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the Author of it.

Now here we have the psalmist,

1. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now that he was in affliction: *for is any afflicted? Let him pray*. It is his comfort, that he had prayed, it is his complaint, that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was, (1.) Very earnest in prayer; *"I have cried unto thee, (v. 1.) and have stretched out my hands unto thee, (v. 9.)* as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it." (2.) He was very frequent and constant in prayer; *"I have called upon thee daily, (v. 9.) day and night," v. 1.* For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him; not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but

spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always; and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continue instant in prayer. (3.) He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer; (v. 2.) "*Let my prayer come before thee*, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees' prayers." He does not desire that men should hear them, but, "*Lord, incline thou thine ear unto my cry*, for to that I refer myself, give what answer to it thou pleasest."

2. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him, in this psalm, a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same purport with this psalm. He cries out, (v. 3.) *My soul is full of troubles*; so Christ said, *Now is my soul troubled*; and, in his agony, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*, like the psalmist's here, even unto death, for he says, *My life draws nigh unto the grave*. Heman was a very wise man, and a good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to be a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of a sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which, sometimes, the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. *The spirit of man*, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; *who then can bear a wounded spirit?*

3. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow; (v. 5.) "*Free among the dead*, one of that ghastly corporation; *like the slain that lie in the grave*, whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of, or is concerned for; nay, whom thou rememberest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms, they are *cut off from thy hand*, which was once employed in supporting them, and reaching out to them; but now there is no more occasion for it, they are cut off from it, and cut off by it;" (for *God will not stretch out his hand to the grave*, Job xxx. 24.) "*thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, *in darkness, in the deep*, (v. 6.) sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone." Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

4. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery; (v. 7.) *Thy wrath lies hard upon me*; could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it had lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard, upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits, were God's waves with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarcely recovered from one dark thought, before he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some, but all, of God's waves were made use of in afflicting him, and bearing him down. Even the children of God's love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

5. It added to this affliction, that his friends deserted him, and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble, it is some comfort to have those about us, that love us and sympathize with us, but this good man had none such; which gives him

occasion not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction; (v. 8.) *Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me*. Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him, for every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be; if our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do other afflictions, Job xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress; "*Thou hast made me an abomination to them*; they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them, not only with contempt, but with abhorrence." Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman, who was so famed for wisdom, was yet, when the world frowned upon him, neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

Lastly, He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable; "*I am shut up, and I cannot come forth*, a close prisoner, under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape." He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoans himself; (v. 9.) *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction*; sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears; *Mine eye mourns*, but *I cry unto thee daily*; let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together; *I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears*.

10. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.

11. Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?

12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13. But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14. LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? 15. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together. 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in; (v. 10-12.) "*Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead*, and raise them to life gain? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No, they leave it to their children to rise up in their rooms to praise God, none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise? Wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But shall thy loving-kindness to thy people be declared in the grave, either by those, or to those, that lie buried there? And thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction;

shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there; and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice, and loving-kindness, but deceased bodies cannot; they can neither receive God's favours in comfort, nor return them in praise." Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him, or would not, much less do they bespeak any disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief; "Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance, but, if it be not hastened, it will come too late; for I shall be dead, and past relief, dead, and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly." Job often pleaded this, Job vii. 8.—x. 21.

II. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so because the deliverance was deferred; (v. 13.) "*Unto thee have I cried* many a time, and found comfort in it, and therefore I will continue to do so; *in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" Note, Though our prayers be not answered immediately, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. God therefore delays the answer, that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early, in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in; in the morning, after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; *My prayer shall prevent thee.* Not as if he could wake sooner to pray, than God to hear and answer, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray; would prevent, that is, go before his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. "My prayer shall present itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out towards it with faith and expectation, even before the day dawns." God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies, let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

III. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer.

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in; (v. 14.) "*Lord, why castest thou off my soul?* What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? *Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.*" He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant; should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off; "No wonder men cast me off; but, Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? *Why hidest thou thy face,* as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me, or wilt not let me know it." Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him, nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be!

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances.

(1.) That God was a Terror to him; *I suffer thy terrors*, v. 15. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his

sins, and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, and of falling into his hands, appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He sweat and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty. Note, Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet, for a time, suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complains of the terrors of God *setting themselves in array against him*, Job vi. 4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deep they wounded him. [1.] They had almost taken away his life; "I am so afflicted with them, that I am ready to die, and" (as the word is) "*to give up the ghost.* *Thy terrors have cut me off,*" v. 16. What is hell, that eternal excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and preying upon their guilty consciences? [2.] They had almost taken away the use of his reason; *When I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted*; that sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and upon some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls; a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion. [3.] This had continued long; *From my youth up, I suffer thy terrors*; he had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was *afflicted and ready to die*, and suffered God's terrors, *from his youth up*; thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth, that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been, and that, being much afflicted, and often ready to die, when they were young, they have, by the grace of God, got such an habitual seriousness, and weariness from the world, as have been of great use to them all their days. Sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services, are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. [4.] His affliction was now extreme, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass. They brake in upon him together like an inundation of water; and this daily, and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the least breathing time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors, that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

(2.) That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him; (v. 18.) *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous; with this the psalmist here closes his complaint, as if this were it that completed his woe, and gave the finishing stroke to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

PSALM LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer, end with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise, and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned; only, in general, that it was at a time when the house of David was woefully eclipsed; some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah was insulted over, and abused, by Nebuchadnezzar, and then they make the title to signify no more than that the psalm was set to the tune of a song of Ethan the son of Zerah, called *Maschil*; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who, outliving that glorious prince, thus lamented the great disgrace done to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. 1. The psalmist, in the joyful, pleasant, part of the psalm, gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends. This he does more briefly, mentioning God's mercy and truth, (v. 1.) and his covenant; (v. 2. . . 4.) but more largely in the following verses, wherein, 1. He adores the glory and perfection of God, v. 5. . . 14. 2. He pleases himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, v. 15. . . 18. 3. He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, v. 19. . . 37. II. In the melancholy part of the psalm, he laments the present calamitous state of the prince and royal family; (v. 38. . . 45.) expostulates with God upon it, (v. 46. . . 49.) and then concludes with prayer for redress, v. 50, 51. In singing this psalm, we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1. **I** WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. 2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must, in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire. We think, when we are in trouble, that we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints, therefore, be turned into thanksgivings; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or a public account.

1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, v. 1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, That God's mercies are inexhaustible, and his truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise; "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*; sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace, and *Maschil*, an instructing song, for the edification of others." We may be for ever singing God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven, world without end; and this is *singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*. With my mouth, and with my pen, (for by that also do we speak,) will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations; assuring posterity, from my own observation and experience, that God

is true to every word that he has spoken, that they may learn to *put their trust in God*, lxxviii. 6.

2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, v. 2. . . 4. Here we have,

(1.) The psalmist's faith and hope; "Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but I have said, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that mercy shall be built up for ever." As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song, (v. 1.) so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant; it is still increasing, like a house in the building up, and shall continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever; for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the *tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old*, Amos ix. 11. Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because *thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens*. Though our expectations are, in some particular instances, disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are *established in the very heavens*, that is, in his eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. The stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed.

(2.) An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope are built; *I have said it*, says the psalmist, for *God hath sworn it*, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking, (v. 3.) owning, to the comfort of his people, "*I have made a covenant, and therefore will make it good*." The covenant is made with David, the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him, and for his sake; representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as Head of the church, and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called *God's chosen*, and *his servant*; and, as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant; [1.] The ratification of it; it was confirmed with an oath; *The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent*. [2.] The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue; *Thy seed will I establish for ever*, so that *David shall not want a son to reign*; (Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.) and that it should continue a royal family; *I will build up thy throne to all generations*, to all the generations of time. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, v. 19, &c.

5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto thee, O LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto thee, O LORD? 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. 8. O LORD God

of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee! or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain: thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. 11. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. 13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe.

I. Where, and by whom, God is to be praised.

1. God is praised by the angels above; *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord;* (v. 5.) that is, "the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises;" *Bless the Lord, ye his angels,* ciii. 20. The works of God are wonders even to them that are best acquainted, and most intimately conversant, with them; the more God's works are known, the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do than to praise God and his wonders.

2. God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth; (*praise waits for him in Zion;*) and though they fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckons himself honoured by them. "Thy faithfulness, and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is that there is a promise, and that he is faithful who has promised." It is expected from God's saints on earth that they praise him; who should, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God; the more the better, it is the more like heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints, he speaks again; (v. 7.) *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints;* saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God, and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and, in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies, God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also, in them, have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared. A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us, in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants, or approach him upon any particular errand. See Lev. x. 3. Those only serve God acceptably who serve him with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xiii. 28.

II. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him to be a Being of unparalleled perfection, such

as one that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, v. 6. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, surely they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him; *Who in the heaven can be compared with the Lord*, so as to challenge any share of the reverence and adoration which are due to him only, or to set up in rivalry with him for the homage of the children of men? They are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes' peers; some parity there is between them, but none between God and the angels; they are not his peers. *To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One,* Isa. xl. 25. This is insisted on again, (v. 8.) *Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?* No angel, no earthly potentate, whatsoever, is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee; that is, "thine angels, who are round about thee, attending thee with their praises, and ready to go on thine errands, are all faithful." Or rather, "In every thing thou doest, on all sides, thou approvest thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was." Among men, it is too often found that those who are most able to break their word are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

III. What we ought, in our praises, to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1. The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures; (v. 9.) *Thou rulest the raging of the sea*, than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; it can swell no higher, roll no further, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt, than God suffers it. "*When the waves thereof arise*, thou canst immediately hush them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm." This coming in here as an act of omnipotence, what manner of man, then, was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?

2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church; his ruling the raging of the sea, and quelling its billows, was an emblem of this; (v. 10.) *Thou hast broken Rahab*; many a proud enemy, so it signifies; Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called *Rahab*; broken it in pieces, as one that is slain, and utterly unable to make head again." The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength." God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies; we think he should slay them immediately, but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be monuments of his justice, lix. 11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces is a comfort to the church, in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.

3. The incontestable property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world; (v. 11, 12.) "Men are honoured for their large possessions; but *the heavens are thine, O Lord, the earth also is thine*; therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. *The world and the fulness thereof*, all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, they are all thine; for *thou hast founded them*." And the Founder may justly claim to be the Owner. He specifies, (1.) The remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited and little known; "*Thou hast created them*, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them." The north is said to be *hung over*

the empty place; yet what fulness there is there, God is the owner of it. (2.) The highest parts of the world; he mentions the two highest hills in Canaan; "*Tabor and Hermon*," (one lying to the west, the other to the east,) "these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thine altar." The little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, lxxv. 12. Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee, on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then, indeed, it might be said to rejoice in that voice which was there heard, *This is my beloved Son*.

4. The power and justice, the mercy and truth, with which he governs the world, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, v. 13, 14. (1.) God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people, and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist the force, or bear the weight, of his mighty hand. *High is his right hand*, to reach the highest, even those that *set their nets among the stars*; (Amos ix. 2, 3. Obad. iv.) *his right hand is exalted* in what he has done, for in thousands of instances he has signalized his power, cxviii. 16. (2.) He never did, nor ever will do, anything that is either unjust or unwise; *for righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne, (so some,) the establishment of it, so others; the preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment. (3.) He always does that which is kind to his people, and consonant to the word which he has spoken; "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face, to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee; mercy in promising, truth in performing; truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better." How praiseworthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection!

15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. 16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17. For thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18. For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King.

The psalmist, having largely showed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shows the blessedness of the Israel of God. *As there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, so, happy art thou, O Israel, there is none like unto thee, O people*, especially as a type of the gospel-Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

1. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, *they know, the joyful sound*, v. 15. This may allude, (1.) To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, Numb. xxiii. 21. Israel has the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the *going in the top of the mulberry-trees* was indeed a joyful sound, (2 Sam. v. 24.) and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. It may allude, (2.) To the sound that was made over the sacrifices, and on the solemn feast-day,

lxxxi. 1-3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. It may allude, (3.) To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound; a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the *sound of abundance of rain*; blessed are the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

2. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them; "*They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance*; they shall govern themselves by thy conduct, guided by thine eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations; they shall have the favour of God, they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing to them; they shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's loving-kindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them, and make them sincere in it, aiming at this, as their end, to be accepted of the Lord." We then walk in the light of the Lord when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

3. They never want matter for joy; blessed are God's people, for, in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, *they shall rejoice all the day*. They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding Joy, have enough to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full, (1 John i. 4.) and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

4. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity; they are happy, for they are high. *Surely in the Lord, in the Lord Christ, they have righteousness and strength*, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance; and therefore *in him shall all the seed of Israel glory*, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. So it is here, v. 16, 17. (1.) "*In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*, and not in any righteousness of their own." We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence. (2.) "*Thou art the Glory of their strength*," that is, "thou art their Strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in." *Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph*. (3.) "*In thy favour, which, through Christ, we hope for, our horn shall be exalted*," the horn denotes beauty, plenty, and power; these they have who are made accepted in the Beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world than to be God's favourites?

5. Their relation to God is their protection and safety; (v. 18.) "*For our shield is of the Lord*," so the margin; "and *our king is from the Holy One of Israel*. If God be our Ruler, he will be our Defender; and who is he, then, that can harm us?" It was the happiness of Israel that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks, and the nominating of their king, so some take it; or rather, that he was himself a *Wall of fire round about them*, and, as a Holy One, the Author and Centre of their holy religion; he was their King, and so their Glory in the midst of them. Christ is the Holy One of Israel, that Holy Thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that *He* was born King of the Jews. Now this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen

out of the people. 20. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: 21. With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24. But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. 26. He shall cry unto me, *Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.* 27. Also I will make him *my* first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. 28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29. His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as a faithful witness in heaven.* Selah.

The covenant God made with David and his seed was mentioned before; (v. 3, 4.) but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God, for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishments in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarcely applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only, who is therefore called *David our King*; (Hos. iii. 5.) and very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption, all our springs are in that, Isa. lv. 3. *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*, Acts xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies. Observe,

I. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, 1. How it was spoken; (v. 19.) *Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One.* God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, 2 Sam. vii. 12-17. *Then when the Holy One of Israel was their King*, (v. 18.) then he appointed David to be his viceroy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he *spake in vision* concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly ac-

quainted with the whole design of redemption, Matth. xi. 27. 2. How it was sworn to, and ratified; (v. 35.) *Once have I sworn by my Holiness*, that darling attribute. In swearing by his Holiness, he swore by himself, for he will as soon cease to be as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough, he needs not swear again, as David did; (1 Sam. xx. 17.) for his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a Priest, so he was made a King, *by an oath*; (Heb. vii. 21.) for his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

II. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, v. 19, 20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and therefore both are called *God's kings*, Ps. ii. 6. David was mighty, a man of courage, and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people; not out of the princes, but the shepherds. God found him out, exalted him, and laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ; 1. He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, *able to save to the uttermost*; mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God; mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the *mighty God*, Isa. ix. 6. 2. He is *chosen out of the people*, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood; being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. 3. God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing, for the salvation, from first to last, is purely the Lord's doing; *he has found the ransom*, Job xxxiii. 24. We could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, Rev. v. 3, 4. 4. God has *laid help upon him*; not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us; laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven; *In me is thy help*, Hcs. xiii. 9. 5. He has exalted him, by constituting him the Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church; clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand. Whom God chooses and uses he will exalt. 6. He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called *Messiah*, or *Christ*, the *Anointed*. 7. In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men.

III. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type, and the Son of David in the antitype, in which not only gracious, but glorious, things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant: and what makes for him, makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking; (v. 21.) *With him my hand not only shall be, but shall be established by promise*; shall be so established, that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin they shall all be usurped and fought against. Christ had a great deal of hard work to do, and hard usage to go through, but He that gave him commission gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission; *"Mine arm also shall strengthen him to break through and bear up under all his difficulties."* No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen.

(2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies, that they should not encroach upon him;

(v. 22.) *The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him, nor afflict him.* He that at first brake the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design; but he could only reach to bruise his heel, further he could not exact upon him or afflict him. Christ became a Surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to have gained advantage against him; but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they could not exact upon him; *The prince of this world cometh, but he has nothing in me*, John xiv. 30. Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him; (v. 23.) *I will beat down his foes before his face*; the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the Death of death itself, and the Destruction of the grave, Hos. xiii. 14. Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation, that persecuted Christ, and put him to death. But all Christ's enemies, who hate him and will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth, and slain before him, Luke xix. 27.

(3.) That he should be the great Trustee of the covenant between God and men; that God would be gracious and true to him, and, in him, be gracious and true to us; (v. 24.) *My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.* They were with David; God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful; they were with Christ; God made good all his promises to him. But that is not all: God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us, are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that, if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ, it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply themselves for it; (v. 28.) *My mercy will I keep for him, to be disposed of by him for evermore*; in the channel of Christ's mediation all the streams of divine goodness will for ever run. Therefore it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which we look for unto eternal life, Jude 21. John xvii. 2. And as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is, through him, firm to us; *My covenant shall stand fast with him*, both the covenant of redemption made with him, and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator, Heb. viii. 6. The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred, and the Father has committed all judgment to him, that *all men might honour him*; (John v. 22, 23.) therefore it is here said, *In my name shall his horn be exalted*; this shall be his glory, that God's name is in him, (Exod. xxiii. 21.) and that he acts in God's name; *As the Father gave me commandment, so I do*.

(4.) That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged; (v. 25.) *I will set his hand in the sea*; he shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the sea, and *his right hand in the rivers*, the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the great sea, and the Red sea, to the river of Egypt, and the river Euphrates. But it is in the Kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when the *kingdoms of this world shall become as the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, (Rev. xi. 15.) and *the isles shall wait for his law*.

(5.) That he should own God as his Father, and God would own him as his Son, his First-born, v. 26,

27. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon: (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David;) *I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son*, (2 Sam. vii. 14.) and the relation shall be owned on both sides. [1.] *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father.* It is probable that Solomon did so; but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him *holy Father, righteous Father*, and taught us to address ourselves to him as *our Father in heaven*. Christ, in his agony, cried unto God, *Thou art my Father*, (Matth. xxvi. 39, 42.) *O my Father*, and, upon the cross, *Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; (he is *my God and your God*, John xx. 17.) and as the Rock of his salvation, who would bear him up, and bear him out, in his undertaking, and make him more than a Conqueror, even a complete Saviour, and therefore, with an undaunted resolution, he *endured the cross, despising the shame*, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. [2.] *I will make him my First-born.* I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be the *First-born of every creature*, and, as such, the *Heir of all things*, Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 2, 6. *When all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father*, then God made him his First-born, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the King of kings, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

2. With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters, this does so; (v. 29, 36.) *His seed shall endure for ever*, and with it his throne; now this will be differently understood, according as we apply it to Christ or David.

(1.) If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah, who descended from the loins of David; it is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, v. 38. But let this encourage them, that, though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message, (2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.) *If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him*. Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that, notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial dignity, a very long time; that, as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was, in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c.; and that the family of David continued a family of distinction till that Son of David came whose throne should endure for ever, see Luke i. 27, 32.—ii. 4, 11. If David's posterity, in after-times, should forsake God and their duty, and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them, and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his loving-kindness from David, nor break his covenant with him, for, in the Messiah, who should come out of his loins, all these premises shall have their accomplishment to the full. Thus, when the Jews were rejected, the apostle shows that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiri-

tual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, Rom. xi. 7.

(2.) If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed, the children which God has given him, Heb. ii. 13. This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church, in the heart, *as the days of heaven*. To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honour him; *He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days*. This holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more; and thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

[1.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects; their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put, that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant, and be assured of that notwithstanding.

First, It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. His children may *forsake God's law*, (v. 30.) by omissions, and *break his statutes*, (v. 31.) by commissions. There are spots, which are the spots of God's children, Deut. xxxii. 5. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those who are members of it, and these corruptions break out.

Secondly, They are here told that they must smart for it; (v. 32.) *I will visit their transgression with a rod, their transgression sooner than that of others; you only have I known, and therefore I will punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Their being related to Christ, shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people, 1. It is but a rod, not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This denotes gentleness in the affliction, it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it denotes a design of good in and by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. 2. It is a rod in the hand of God; (*I will visit them*;) he who is wise, and knows what he does, gracious, and will do what is best. 3. It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of, but when there is great need; *If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else*. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

[2.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this; (v. 33.) *Nevertheless, my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him*. *First*, "Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken." Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant-love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it does not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people, 1. For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God says, *I will not take it from him*; (v. 33.) *I will not lie unto David*, v. 35. We are unworthy, but he is worthy. 2. For the covenant's sake; *My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break*. It was supposed that they had broken God's statutes, *profaned and polluted* them, so the word signifies, "But," says God, "I will not break, I will not profane and pollute, my covenant;" it is the same word. That which is said and sworn, is, that God will have a

church in the world, as long as sun and moon endure, v. 36, 37. The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measurers of; but the *seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world* while the world stands, to shine in it, and when it is at an end, they shall be established lights, shining in the firmament of the Father.

33. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, *by casting it to the ground*. 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41. All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah. 46. How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48. What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. 49. LORD, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth? 50. Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach* of all the mighty people; 51. Where-with thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. 52. Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and amen.

In these verses, we have,

1. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. Thou saidst thou wouldest not *take away thy loving-kindness, but thou hast cast off*. Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word, and never contradict it.

1. David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was *wroth with him*; (v. 38.) had entered into covenant with the family, but now, for aught he could perceive, he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, v. 39. We misconstrue the rebukes of Providence, if we think they make void the covenant. When the great Anointed One, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with, and yet did not make void his

covenant with him, for that was established for ever.

2. The honour of the house of David was lost, and laid in the dust; *Thou hast profaned his crown,* (which was always looked upon as sacred,) by *casting it to the ground*, to be trampled on, *v. 39. Thou hast made his glory to cease*, (so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon does it wither,) and *thou hast cast his throne down to the ground*, not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom, *v. 44.* If it were penned in Rehoboam's time, it was true as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust, but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which fadeth not away.

3. It was exposed, and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family; (*v. 40.*) *Thou hast broken down all his hedges*, all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them, and *thou hast made even his strong holds a ruin*, so that they were rather a reproach to them than any shelter. *All that pass by the way spoil him,* (*v. 41.*) and make an easy prey of him; see *lxxx. 12, 13.* The enemies talk insolently; *He is a reproach to his neighbours*, who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity, (*v. 42.*) *"Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries, not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way."* If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power, unless it were given them from above. But when God does permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleases them; *"Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice;* and is this for thy glory, that those who hate thee, shall have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee?"

4. It was disabled to help itself; (*v. 43.*) *"Thou hast turned the edge of his sword,* and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and (which is worse) *thou hast turned the edge of his spirit,* and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle." The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them, nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, further than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them, but it is sad with the church, when these cannot stand who should stand up for it.

5. It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit; (*v. 45.*) *The days of his youth hast thou shortened;* it is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age. This should intimate that it was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old, and began to decay already. Thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach, that a family, which, in the first and second reign, looked so great, and made such a figure, should, in the third, dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with what was expected, was but the day of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the day of their youth shortened, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn, (1.) What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost;

when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace and iniquity stains their glory. (2.) How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant is made void, if we be disappointed of that; a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master has so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world.

II. A very pathetic expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy.

1. The long continuance of the trouble; (*v. 46.*) *How long, O Lord, wilt thou hide thyself? For ever?* That which grieved them most, was, that God himself, as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them, and that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night, when God was withdrawn; *Thou hidest thyself for ever.* Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them; *"Shall thy wrath burn like fire?"* How long shall it burn? Shall it never be put out? What is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever? And is that the lot of thine anointed?"

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death; *"Lord, let thine anger cease, and return thou, in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will, ere long, be at an end, let it not be always so miserable, that I should rather choose no being at all than such a being."* Job pleads thus, *ch. x. 20, 21.* And, probably, the psalmist here urges it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the days of whose youth were shortened, *v. 45.*

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life; (*v. 47.*) *Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am,* say some; therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* or, *Unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam?* Now, this may be understood either, [1.] As speaking a great truth. If the ancient loving-kindnesses spoken of, (*v. 49.*) be forgotten, (those relating to another life,) man is indeed made in vain; considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side, we might be ready to think that man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers, and faculties of reason, and filled with such vast designs, and desires; but God would not make man in vain, therefore, *Lord, remember those loving-kindnesses.* Or, [2.] As bespeaking a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain, *God has not made all men,* nor any man, *in vain,* *Isa. xlv. 18.* For, *First,* If we think that God has made man in vain, because so many have short lives, and long afflictions, in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that *therefore* they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble, may yet glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. *Secondly,* If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him, nor enjoy him, it is true, that, as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them had they not been born, than not to be born again; but it was not owing to God that they were made in vain, it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil, and those whom he is not glorified by, he will be glorified upon.

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidable-ness of death; (*v. 48.*) *"What man" (what strong man, so the word is) "is he that liveth, and shall not see death?"* The king himself, of the house of

David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke: Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. *Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* No, he shall not when his time is come. Let him not, therefore, be delivered into the hand of the grave, by the miseries of a dying life, till his time is come." We must learn here, that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave. It concerns us, therefore, to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that, *when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.*

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for, and the covenant he made with, his servant David; (v. 49.) "*Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou showdest, nay, which thou swarest, to David in thy truth? Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David?*" God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that God will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies, and the indignity done to God's anointed; (v. 50, 51.) "*Remember, Lord, the reproach, and let it be rolled away from us, and returned upon our enemies.*" (1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their Master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached. (2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burthen to all that were concerned for the honour of God; "*I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people, and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart, and can scarcely keep up my spirits under the weight.*" (3.) "*They are thine enemies who do thus reproach us; and wilt thou not appear against them as such?*" (4.) *They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.* They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They have reproached the delays of the Messiah; so Dr. Hammond. They called him, *He that should come*; but, because he was not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do, in like manner, reproach the footsteps of the Messiah, when they ask, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed, some refer to the serpent's *bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman*; or, to the sufferings of Christ's followers, who tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

Lastly, The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint; (v. 52.) *Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and amen.* Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies; the more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences, and questioning his promises; let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God. However it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never dis-

trust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it; in blessing God, we encourage ourselves. Here is a double *Amen*, according to the double signification *Amen*; so it is, God is blessed for ever, *Amen*; be it so, let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint; (v. 1.) and now he concludes it with a doxology. They who give God thanks for what he *has done*, may give him thanks also for what he *will do*; God will follow those with his mercies, who, in a right manner, follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

The foregoing psalm was supposed to be penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses, (as appears by the title,) the most ancient penman of sacred writ. We have upon record a praising song of his, (*Exod. xv.*) which is alluded to, (*Rev. xv. 3.*) and an instructing song of his, *Deut. xxxii.* But this is of a different nature from both, for it is called a *prayer*. It is supposed that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, that they should be wasted away by a series of miseries for 38 years together, and that none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses (*Deut. xxxi. 19, 21.*) was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story to which this psalm seems to refer, *Numb. xiv.* Probably, Moses penned this prayer, to be daily used, either by the people in their tents, or, at least, by the priests in the tabernacle service, during their tedious fatigue in the wilderness. In it, I. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him, v. 1, 2. II. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, v. 3-6. III. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, v. 7-11. IV. He commits himself and his people to God by prayer for divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, v. 12-17. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general, and, in singing it, we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnishes us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.

A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

1. **L**ORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. 2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. 4. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

This psalm is entitled a *prayer of Moses*; where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms was begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection: perhaps it was

written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths, which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called *the man of God*, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of the great Prophet.

In these verses, we are taught,

1. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days; (*v. 1.*) *Lord, thou hast been to us a Habitation, or Dwelling-place; a Refuge, or Help, in all generations.* Now that they were fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their Habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home, at rest, in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then God was their Refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived, and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort, in reference to all the toils and tosses they meet with in this world. In him we may repose and shelter ourselves, as in our Dwelling-Place.

2. To give God the glory of his eternity; (*v. 2.*) *Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world,* (as it is expressed, Prov. viii. 26.) *before the earth fell in travail,* or, as we may read it, *before thou hast formed the earth and the world,* that is, before the beginning of time, thou hadst a being, *even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God;* an eternal God, whose existence has neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it; but who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality; we are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an ever-living God, and they shall find him so, who have him for theirs.

3. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible, uncontrollable, power to dispose of him as he pleases; (*v. 3.*) *Thou turnest man to destruction,* with a word's speaking, when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house; and thou sayest, *Return, ye children of men.* (1.) When God is, by sickness, or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he does thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. This God *speaketh once, yea, twice, "Return unto me, from whom ye have revolted,"* Jer. iv. 1. (2.) When God is threatening to *turn men to destruction*, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he wonderfully recovers them, and says, as the old Translation reads it, *Again thou sayest, Return to life and health again.* For God kills, and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and brings up. (3.) When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, *"Return, ye children of men,* one as well as another; return to your first principles, let the body return to the earth as it was, (*dust to dust,* Gen. iii. 19.) and let the soul *return to God who gave it,"* Eccl. xii. 7. (4.) Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, *Return, ye children of men,* at the general resurrection, when, though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and then shalt thou call, and I will answer; (Job xiv. 14, 15.) thou shalt bid me return, and I shall

return. The body, the soul, shall both return and unite again.

4. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, *v. 4.* Some of the patriarchs lived near a thousand years; Moses knew it very well, and had recorded it; but what is their long life to God's eternal life? A thousand years, to us, are a long period, which we cannot expect to survive; or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is, *in thy sight, as yesterday,* as one day, as that which is freshest in mind; nay, it is but as a *watch of the night*, which was but three hours. (1.) A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity, they are less than a day, than an hour, to a thousand years; betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child (that is born and dies the same day) is to theirs. (2.) All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal Mind, as what was done yesterday, or the last hour, is to us, and more too. God will say, at the great day, to those whom he has *turned to destruction, Return, arise ye dead.* But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that it is a long time since it was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years in God's sight are but as one day. *Nullum tempus occurrit Regi—To the King all periods are alike.* To this purport these words are quoted, 2 Pet. iii. 8.

5. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity, even at his best estate, (*v. 5, 6.*) look upon all the children of men, and we shall see, (1.) That their life is a dying life; *Thou carriest them away as with a flood,* that is, they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; the flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death; or we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or, as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. (2.) That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet they are as a sleep; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passes unobserved by us, as it does with men asleep; and, when it is over, it is as nothing. (3.) That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass, which grows up and flourishes in the morning, looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mowers cut it down, and it immediately withers, changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly; and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time. Man, in his prime, does but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed; and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but he may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. *All flesh is as grass.*

7. For we are consumed by thine anger and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is

told. 10. The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger! even according to thy fear; *so is* thy wrath.

Moses had, in the foregoing verses, lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men *are as a sleep, and as the grass*; but here he teaches the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves; their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure: here they speak of themselves; *We Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days are passed away.*

1. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries; *We are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thine anger, by thy wrath; (v. 7.) our days are passed away in thy wrath, v. 9.* The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the *anger* of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more than a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there had been no such debt owing to it; it is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Are we consumed by decays of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronic disease? We must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any surprising stroke? That also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

2. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them; (v. 8.) *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins.* It was not without cause that God was angry with them; he had said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*; but they had provoked him, and will own that, in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them; (1.) For their open contempts of him, and the daring affronts they had given him; *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting of his power, and their despising of the pleasant land: these he set before him, when he passed that sentence on them; those kindled the fire of God's wrath against them, and kept good things from them. (2.) For their more hidden departures from him; *"Thou hast set our secret sins,* those which go no further than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts, *thou hast set these in the light of thy countenance;* thou hast discovered these, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them." Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. Those who in heart return into Egypt, who set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolvers or idolaters. See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

3. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life, or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible; (v. 9.) *All our days are likely to be passed away in thy wrath,*

under the tokens of thy displeasure; and, though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to *spend* them *as a tale that is told.* The 38 years, which, after this, they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the 2d year to the 40th. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of *a tale that is told*; for it was only to pass away time, like telling stories, that they spent these years in the wilderness; all that while, they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt, *there was not one feeble person among the tribes,* (cv. 37.) but now they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospects of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter-tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world; *We spend our years, we bring them to an end,* each year, and all, at last, *as a tale that is told; as the breath of our mouth in winter,* (so some,) which soon disappears; *as a thought,* (so some,) than which nothing more quick; *as a word,* which is soon spoken, and then vanishes into air; or, *as a tale that is told.* The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year, when it is past, is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixt, but all short and transient: that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time. Our years, when they are gone, can no more be recalled than the word that we have spoken can. The loss and waste of our time, which imply our fault and folly, may be thus complained of: we should spend our years, like the despatch of business, with care and industry; but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, carelessly, and without regard.

Every year passed *as a tale that is told*; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few, (v. 10.) 70 or 80 at most, which may be understood, either, (1.) Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness; all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above 20 years old, were to die within 38 years; they numbered those only that *were able to go forth to war*, most of whom, we may suppose, were between 20 and 40, who therefore must have all died before 80 years old, and many before 60, and, perhaps, much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers. And those that lived to 70 or 80, yet, being under a sentence of consumption, and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness-state, their strength, their life, was nothing but *labour and sorrow*, which otherwise would have been made a new life, by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or, (2.) To the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before Moses, it was usual for men to live about 100 years, or near 150; but since, 70 or 80 is the common stint, which few exceed, and multitudes never come near. We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be 70 years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which, before, had been transmitted by tradition; now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled, and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men's living long that there had been. If, by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to 80 years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of, it does but serve to

prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even *their strength then is labour and sorrow*, much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in. Or, it may be taken thus: *Our years are 70, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are 80; but the breadth of our years*, (for so the latter words signify, rather than strength,) *the whole extent of them, from infancy to old age, is but labour and sorrow*. In the sweat of our face we must eat bread, our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and, perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, *it is soon cut off, and we fly away*, and do not live out half our days.

4. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God; (v. 11.) *Who knows the power of thine anger?* (1.) None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach, and how deep it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger; damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? (2.) Few do seriously consider it as they ought. *Who knows it*, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those who make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. For, *according to thy fear, so is thy wrath*; God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it; let men have ever so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for, and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. *Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?*

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. 13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. 14. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. 16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. *Is any afflicted? Let him learn thus to pray.*

Four things they are here directed to pray for.

1. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, "*Lord, teach us to number our days*; (v. 12.) Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world." Note, (1.) It is an excellent art rightly to *number our days*, so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was who counted upon many years to come, when, that night, his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days, as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a

double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. (2.) Those that would learn this arithmetic, must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit to put them upon considering, and to give them a good understanding. (3.) We then number our days to good purpose, when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence, will very much contribute.

2. For the turning away of God's anger from them; that, though the decree was gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remedy, but they must die in the wilderness; "*Yet return, O Lord, be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants*; (v. 13.) send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? *We are thy servants, thy people*; (Isa. lxi. 9.) when wilt thou change thy way towards us?" In answer to this prayer, and upon their profession of repentance, (Numb. xiv. 39, 40.) God, in the next chapter, proceeded with the laws concerning sacrifices, (Numb. xv. 1, &c.) which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants, *for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have showed them such things as these*.

3. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, v. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own; *Have mercy upon us, O God*, is a prayer we are all concerned to say *Amen* to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of divine mercy; that God's *tender mercies may speedily prevent us, early in the morning* of our days, when we are young and flourishing, v. 6. Let us pray for the true satisfaction and happiness which are to be had only in the favour and mercy of God; iv. 6, 7. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's loving-kindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied; will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy.

(1.) That it would be a full fountain of future joys; "*O satisfy us with thy mercy*, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be, while we lie under thy wrath; but that we *may rejoice and be glad*, not only for a time, upon the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness." With respect to those that make God their chief Joy, as their joy may be full, (1 John i. 4.) so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation, and nothing can separate them from it. (2.) That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs; "*Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us*; let the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been, and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. *Lord, thou usdest to set the one over against the other*; (Eccl. vii. 14.) do so in our case; let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling, now put into our hands the cup of salvation." God's people reckon the returns of God's loving-kindness a sufficient recompense for all their troubles.

4. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, v. 16, 17. (1.) That he

would manifest himself in carrying it on; "*Let thy work appear upon thy servants*"; let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself, and to fit us for thyself." God's servants cannot work for him, unless he work upon them, and work in them, both to will and to do: and then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent *for* us, when the operations of his grace are apparent *upon* us. "Let thy work appear, and in it thy glory will appear to us and those that shall come after us." In praying for God's grace, God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them; (Numb. xiv. 31.) *Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones will I bring into Canaan*; "Lord," say they, "let thy work appear upon us, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of." (2.) That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on, in doing their part towards it. [1.] That he would smile upon them in it; *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*; let it appear that God favours us; let us have God's ordinances kept up among us, and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances; so some. We may apply this petition both to our sanctification, and to our consolation; *Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God*; let that be upon us in all we say and do; let the grace of God in us, produce the light of good works, make our faces to shine; that is the comeliness God puts upon us, and those are comely indeed who are so beautified. And then let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God. [2.] That he would succeed them in it: *Establish thou the work of our hands upon us*. God's working upon us, (v. 16.) does not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him, and working out our salvation. But, when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to *prosper our handy works*, to give us to compass what we aim at for his glory. We are so unworthy of divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it, and to repeat the request; *Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it*, and, in order to that, establish us in it.

PSALM XCI.

Some of the ancients were of opinion that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing psalm, which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for *Ps. xciv.* is expressly said to be penned by David, and long after Moses, *Heb. iv. 7.* It is probable that this psalm also was penned by David; it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad seal, he needed it himself, especially if the psalm was penned, as some conjecture it was, at the time of the pestilence, which was sent for his numbering of the people, but in the name of the King of kings, and under the broad seal of Heaven. Observe, 1. The psalmist's own resolution to take God for his Keeper, (v. 2.) from which he gives both direction and encouragement to others, v. 9. 2. The promises which are here made, in God's name, to all those that do so in sincerity. 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of Heaven, v. 1, 4. 2. They shall be delivered from the malice of the powers of darkness, (v. 3, 5, 6.) and that by a distinguishing preservation, v. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, v. 10, 12. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, v. 13. 5. They shall be the special favourites

of God himself, v. 14, 16. In singing this, we must shelter ourselves under, and then solace ourselves in, the divine protection. Many think, that to Christ, as Mediator, these promises do primarily belong, (*Isa. xlix. 2.*) not because to him the Devil applied one of these promises, (*Matth. iv. 6.*) but because to him they are very applicable, and, coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

1. **H**E that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say of the LORD, *He is my refuge*, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. 6. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. 7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses, we have,

I. A great truth laid down in general, That all those who live a life of communion with God, are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy serenity, and security of mind, at all times; (v. 1.) *He that dwells, that sits down, in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*; he that by faith chooses God for his Guardian shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer, that he *dwells in the secret place of the most High*; he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposes in him as his Rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; worships within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude. 2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they *abide under the shadow of the Almighty*; he shelters them, and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence, under God's protection; he will be their Rest and Refuge for ever.

II. The psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself; (v. 2.) *I will say of the Lord*, whatever others say of him, "*He is my Refuge*; I choose him as such, and confide in him. Others made idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, *He is my Refuge*: any other is a *refuge of lies*. He is a Refuge that will not fail me; for he is *my Fortress and Strong-hold*." Idolaters called their idols *Mahuzzim*, their *most strong-hold*; (*Dan. xi. 39.*) but therein they deceived themselves; those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God their Fortress. There being no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly does it follow, *In him will I trust*. If Jehovah be our God, our Refuge, and our Fortress, what can we desire, which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle, nor false, nor weak, nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. *We know whom we have trusted*.

III. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise; not only from his own experience of the comfort of it, (for in that there might be a fallacy,) but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is, nor can be, any deceit; (v. 3, 4, &c.) *Surely he shall deliver thee.* Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God their Refuge, cannot but desire that others may do so. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which would be fatal to them; (v. 3.) *from the snare of the fowler*, which is laid unseen, and catches the unwary prey on a sudden; and *from the noisome pestilence*, which seizes men unawares, and against which there is no guard. This promise protects, (1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening, and very near, while yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, any more than the bird is of the *snare of the fowler*. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the Divine Providence, that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. (2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by Divine Grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the *snare of the fowler*, and from the contagion of sin, which is the *noisome pestilence*. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul, will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their Protector; they must needs be safe who have him for their Keeper, and successful for whom he undertakes; (v. 4.) *He shall cover thee*, shall keep thee *secret*, (xxxix. 20.) and so keep thee safe, xxvii. 5. God protects believers, (1.) With the greatest tenderness and affection; intimated in that, *He shall cover thee with his feathers, under his wings*, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, Matth. xxiii. 37. By natural instinct, she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection, when she sees them in danger; not only keeps them safe, but cherishes them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, who are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a proselyte to the true religion, that he is come to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*, Ruth ii. 12. (2.) With the greatest power and efficacy; wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, are yet weak, and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*, a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, v. 5, 6. Here is, (1.) Great danger supposed, the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are apt to be timorous, will, in neither period, think themselves safe. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, beside those things that are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all; we read of *fear in the night*, Cant. iii. 8. There is also a *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, as that was which slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians. No locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them. But surely in the day-time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an *arrow that flieth by day too*, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-

noon, when we are awake, and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But, (2.) Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger: "*Thou shalt not be afraid*, God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, (that fear which hath torment,) in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that, though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection." A believer needs not fear, and therefore *should not* fear, any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out; *O death, where is thy sting?* It is also under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities, in a distinguishing way; (v. 7.) "When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that *thousands and ten thousands* fall, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, *fall at thy side, at thy right hand*, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee, and if they fall by the pestilence, their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee; *yet it shall not come nigh thee*, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not." Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption, may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be *afraid with any amazement*, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their lifetime, *through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel, when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people, that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled to them, but his threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them; (v. 8.) *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked*, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Egypt by the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw, when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, (Luke xiii. 28.) so it will magnify the salvation of the saints, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, Isa. lxvi. 24. Ps. lvi. 10.

9. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath

known my name. 15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purport with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceeding great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

I. The psalmist assures believers of divine protection, from his own experience; and that which he says is the word of God, and what we may rely upon.

Observe, 1. The character of those who shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises; it is much the same with that, *v. 1*. They are such as make the *most High their Habitation*, (*v. 9*.) as are continually with God, and rest in him, as make his name both their Temple and their strong Tower, as dwell in love, and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our Habitation; to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; we shall be welcome to him as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation, from the arrests of the law, or the clamours of conscience; then too we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in *perfect peace*, Isa. xxvi. 3. To encourage us to make the Lord our Habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had had in doing so; "He whom thou makest thy *Habitation is my Refuge*; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me." *In my father's house there are many mansions*, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another.

2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the *most High their Habitation*.

(1.) That, whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them; (*v. 10*.) "*There shall no evil befall thee*; though trouble and affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though, for the present, it be not joyous but grievous, yet, in the end, it shall yield so well, that thou thyself shalt own *no evil befall thee*. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it, and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling, shall be taken under the divine protection; *there shall no plague come nigh* that; nothing to do thee or thine any damage." *Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest—No evil can befall a good man*. Seneca de Providentia.

(2.) That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, *v. 11, 12*. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, nor is it ever the worse for its being quoted and abused by the Devil in tempting Christ, Matth. iv. 6. Observe,

[1.] The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being, and gives laws to them, whose they are, and whom they were made to serve, *he shall give his angels a charge over thee*; not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer. The angels *keep the charge of the Lord their God*; and this is the charge they receive from him. It denotes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. The charge is, *to keep thee in all thy ways*; here is a limitation of the promise; *They shall keep thee in thy ways*, that is, "as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty;" they that go out of the way, put them-

selves out of God's protection; this word the Devil left out, when he quoted it to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is *to keep thee in all thy ways*; even where there is no apparent danger, yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger, we shall have it. Wherever the saints go, the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children.

[2.] The care which the angels take of the saints, pursuant to this charge; *They shall bear thee up in their hands*, which denotes both their great ability and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the nurse carries the little child about in her arms; it speaks us *helpless*, and them *helpful*. They are condescending in their ministrations; they keep the feet of the saints, lest they *dash them against a stone*, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble.

[3.] That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them; (*v. 13*.) *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*; the Devil is called a *roaring lion*, the *old serpent*, the *red dragon*; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that, (Rom. xvi. 20.) *The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet*. Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, (Col. ii. 15.) and through him *we are more than conquerors*; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set our feet on the necks of vanquished enemies. Some think that this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples' commission, that they should *take up serpents*, Mark xvi. 18. It may be applied to that care of the Divine Providence by which we are preserved from ravenous noxious creatures, (*The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee*, Job v. 23.) nay, and have ways and means of taming them, Jam. iii. 7.

II. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he has in store for them, *v. 14-16*. Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, as if he had said, "Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them."

And now, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters. (1.) They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves. (2.) They are such as have set their love upon him; and they who rightly know him, will love him, will place their love upon him, as the only adequate Object of it, will let out their love toward him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him with a resolution never to remove it to any rival. (3.) They are such as call upon him, as by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are, which God makes to the saints.

(1.) That he will, in due time, deliver them out of trouble; *I will deliver him*, (*v. 14*.) and again, (*v. 15*.) denoting a double deliverance; living and dying; a deliverance in trouble, and a deliverance cut of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength, if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge, at length, from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See xxxiv. 19. 2 Tim. iii. 11.—iv. 18.

(2.) That he will, in the mean time, *be with them in trouble*, v. 15. If he does not immediately put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and *know their souls in adversity*; will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles.

(3.) That herein he will answer their prayers; *He shall call upon me*; I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer, answer by promises, (lxxxv. 8.) answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief, and answer by graces, *strengthening them with strength in their souls*, (cxxxviii. 3.) thus he answered Paul with *grace sufficient*, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(4.) That he will exalt and dignify them; *I will set him on high*, out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock *above the waves*, Isa. xxxiii. 16. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, and to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern; and then they are set on high. *I will honour him*; those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, and designing them for his kingdom and glory, John xii. 26.

(5.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world; (v. 16.) *With length of days will I satisfy him*; [1.] They shall live long enough; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for heaven; and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either *by him or upon him*? [2.] They shall think it long enough, for God by his grace shall wean them from the world, and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, *satur dierum—satisfied with living*. A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no not with long life: he still cries, *Give, give*; but he that has his treasure and heart in another world, has soon enough of this, he would not live always.

(6.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world: this crowns the blessedness; *I will show him my salvation*; show him the *Mess'ah*, so some; good old Simcon was then satisfied with long life, when he could say, *Mine eyes have seen thy salvation*; nor was there any greater joy to the Old Testament saints, than to see Christ's day, though at a distance. More probably, the salvation may denote the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought; he *will show him* that, bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face which we here see through a glass darkly; and, in the mean time, he will give him a prospect of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

PSALM XCII.

It is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers, (who are usually free of their conjectures,) that this psalm was penned and sung by Adam in innocency, on the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the psalm itself, which speaks of the workers of iniquity, when as yet sin had not entered. It is probable that it was penned by David, and, being calculated for the sabbath-day, 1. Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, v. 1.-3. II. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, v. 4. 6. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption, the psalmist sings unto

God both of mercy and judgment, the ruin of sinners and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. 1. The wicked shall perish, (v. 7.) but God is eternal, v. 8. 2. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, v. 9, 10. 3. David's enemies shall be confounded (v. 11.) but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, v. 12.-15. In singing this psalm, we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

A psalm or song for the sabbath-day.

1. **I**T is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: 2. To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. 4. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5. O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed to be sung, at least, it usually was sung, in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath-day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; *for the Father worketh hitherto*. Note, 1. The sabbath day must be a day not only of holy rest, but of holy work; and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath-day must be a thanks-giving-day; and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, *A psalm or song for the age to come*, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Christ, enjoy that *sabbatism which remains for the people of God*, (Heb. iv. 9.) the beginning of the everlasting sabbath.

In these verses,

I. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God; (v. 1.-3.) *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord*. Praising God is good work; it is good in itself, and good for us; it is our duty, the rent, the tribute, we are to pay to our great Lord; we are unjust if we withhold it; it is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it; it is good, for it is pleasant and profitable; work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in further mercy; it is fit to sing to his name, who is Most High, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here,

1. How we must praise God; we must do it by *showing forth his loving-kindness and his faithfulness*. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must show them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves, and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must show forth, not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him, and strike an awe upon us, but his loving-kindness and his faithfulness; for his goodness is his glory, (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.) and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these, therefore, we must show forth as our pleas in prayer, and the matter of our joy.

This was then done, not only by singing, but by music joined with it, *upon an instrument of ten strings*; (v. 3.) but then it was to be with a solemn sound, not that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them.

2. When we must praise God; *in the mornings, and every night*, not only on sabbath-days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families; showing forth, to ourselves and those about us, his loving-kindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God; must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh, and before the business of the day comes in upon us; and, every night, when we are again composed and retired, and are recollecting ourselves; we must give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in, we must bless God.

II. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to, and to direct us in, this work; (v. 4.) *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work*. Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise, who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. "God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart; and therefore, whatever others may think of them, I must think well, and speak well, of them." 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world why we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? Let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad, through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption?

(1.) Let us then thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist does; *I will triumph in the works of thy hands*. From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us, we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2 Thess. i. 13, 14.

(2.) Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God; (v. 5.) *O Lord, how great are thy works!* Great beyond conception, beyond expression! The products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance; men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them. "Men's works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, *thy works are great*, and such as cannot be measured; for *thy thoughts are very deep*, and such as cannot be fathomed." God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom, as his works do the efforts of our power. *His thoughts are above our thoughts*, as his ways are above our ways, Isa. lv. 9. *Oh the depth of God's designs!* Rom. xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will, according to which he doeth all things. What a compass his thoughts fetch, and to what a length they reach!

III. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those who do, v. 6. They are fools, they are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand, how great God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, or give him the glory of them; they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands; (xxviii. 5.) particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity, which is spoken

of; (v. 7.) they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those who through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is that they shall be destroyed for ever*: 8. But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore. 9. For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish, all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11. Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies; and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. 12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15. To show that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The psalmist had said, (v. 4.) that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he does so.

I. He triumphs over God's enemies, (v. 7, 9, 11.) triumphs in the foresight of their destruction; not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness.

He is confident of the ruin of sinners,

1. Though they are flourishing; (v. 7.) *When the wicked spring as the grass in spring*, (so numerous, so thick-sown, so green, and growing so fast,) and all the workers of iniquity do flourish in pomp and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises, one would think that all this was in order to their being happy, that it was a certain evidence of God's favour, and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve: but it is quite otherwise; it is, *that they shall be destroyed for ever*. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, Prov. i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture.

2. Though they are daring, v. 9. They are thine enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so; they are contrary to God, and they fight against God; they are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for *who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?* Note, All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them; and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion; but they shall be scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. *In the world to come, they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous*; so the Chaldee, Ps. i. 5.

3. Though they had a particular malice against

the psalmist, and, upon that account, he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them; (v. 11.) "*My eye shall see my desire on mine enemies that rise up against me; I shall see them not only disabled to do me any further mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me, and brought either to repentance or ruin.*" and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more than thus, *My eye shall look on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear of the wicked.* He does not say what he shall see, or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God will be glorified, and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ will fall before him, and be made his footstool.

II. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace.

1. In the glory of God; (v. 8.) "*But thou, O Lord, art Most High for evermore.*" The workers of iniquity, who fight against us, may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but *thou art High, Most High for evermore*; their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting." Let us not, therefore, fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but *God's righteousness shall be for ever*, Isa. li. 7, 8.

2. In the grace of God; his favour, and the fruits of it.

(1.) To himself; (v. 10.) "*Thou, O Lord, that art thyself Most High, shalt exalt my horn.*" The great God is the Fountain of honour, and he, being *high for evermore*, himself will exalt his people for ever, for *he is the Praise of all his saints*, cxlvi. 14. The wicked are forbidden to *lift up the horn*, (lxxv. 4, 5.) but those that serve God and the interest of his kingdom with their honour and power, and commit them to him to keep them, to raise them, to use them, and to dispose of them, as he pleases, may hope that he will *exalt their horn as the horn of an unicorn*, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other; *My horn shalt thou exalt, when thine enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be doomed to shame and everlasting contempt.* He adds, *I shall be anointed with fresh oil*, which bespeaks a fresh confirmation in his office to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped; grace is the anointing of the Spirit; when this is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, *When I grow old, thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil. My old age shalt thou exalt with rich mercy*; so the Seventy. Compare v. 14. *They shall bring forth fruit in old age.* The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the *hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness.*

(2.) To all the saints. They are here represented as *trees of righteousness*, Isa. lxi. 3. Ps. i. 3. Observe,

[1.] The good place they are fixed in; they are *planted in the house of the Lord*, v. 13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves, they are *planted*, not in common soil, but in paradise, *in the house of the Lord.* Trees are not planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house; because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue that keep them alive, and make them fruitful. They

fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory.

[2.] The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised,

First, That they shall grow, v. 12. Where God gives true grace, he will give more grace; God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and, with a holy ambition, shall aspire toward the upper world: they shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Secondly, That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession, and in the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves, and respected by all about them. *They shall flourish like the palm-tree*, which has a stately body, (Cant. vii. 7.) and large boughs, Lev. xxiii. 40. Judg. iv. 5. Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here, as being evergreen. The wicked flourish as the grass, (v. 7.) which is soon withered, and the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived, and which the winter does not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, *Sub pondere crescit—The more it is pressed down, the more it grows*; so the righteous flourish under their burthens; the more they are afflicted, the more they multiply. Being planted in the *house of the Lord*, there their root is, *they flourish in the courts of our God*, there their branches spread, *Their life is hid with Christ in God.* But their light also shines before men. It is desirable that those who have a place, should have a name, in God's house, and within his walls, Isa. lvi. 5. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house. And let those who flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it; it is by virtue of this promise, *They shall be fat and flourishing.* Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the *root and fatness of the good olive*, Rom. xi. 17. Without a living principle of grace in the heart, the profession will not be long flourishing; but where that is, *the leaf also shall not wither*, Ps. i. 3. *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*, civ. 16. See Hos. xiv. 5, 6.

Thirdly, That they shall be fruitful; were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but *they shall still bring forth fruit*, the products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified, and others are edified. These are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege, as well as the duty, of the righteous to abound; and it is the matter of a promise, as well as the matter of a command. It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age. Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said, to *show that the Lord is upright*, (v. 15.) that he is true to his promises, and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises that that divine nature is preserved and kept up; and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that *the Lord is upright*, and so he will *show himself with an upright man*, xviii. 25. This the psalmist triumphs in; "*He is my Rock, and*

there is no unrighteousness in him. I have chosen him for my Rock on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet. I have found him a Rock, strong and steadfast, and his word as firm as a rock. I have found" (and let every one speak as he finds) "that there is no unrighteousness in him." He is as able, and will be as kind, as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

PSALM XCIII.

This short psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. It relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him, doubtless, the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the Eternal Word, even before his incarnation, he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken. I. Have other kings their royal robes? So has he, v. 1. II. Have they their throne? So has he, v. 2. III. Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? So has he, v. 3, 4. IV. Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? So is it his, v. 5. In singing this psalm, we forget ourselves, if we forget Christ, to whom the Father has given all power both in heaven and in earth.

1. **THE LORD** reigneth; he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved. 2. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. 4. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea*, than the mighty waves of the sea. 5. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thy house, O LORD, for ever.

Next to the being of God, there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion; that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns; (v. 1.) not only that he is King, of right, and is the Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King, in fact, and does direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions, according to the counsel of his own will. This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms: *The Lord reigns*. It is the song of the gospel-church, of the glorified church; (Rev. xix. 6.) *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns*. Here we are told how he reigns.

1. The Lord reigns gloriously; *He is clothed with majesty*. The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? Yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

2. He reigns powerfully; He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is *clothed with strength*, as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness, and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour; both *strength and honour are his clothing*. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. (1.) With this power

he has girded himself; it is not derived from any other, nor does the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself, and with it does whatsoever he pleases. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him who has power to kill, and cast into hell. (2.) To this power it is owing that the world stands to this day. The world also is established; it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; it is so still, by that Providence which upholds all things, and is a continued creation; it is so established, that though he has *hanged the earth upon nothing*, (Job xxvi. 7.) yet it *cannot be moved*; all things *continue to this day, according to his ordinance*. Note, The preserving of the powers of nature, and the course of nature, is what the God of nature must have the glory of; and we, who have the benefit thereof daily, are very careless and ungrateful, if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world, and to settle its affairs; and if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

3. He reigns eternally; (v. 2.) *Thy throne is established of old*. (1.) God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, no doubt, may give law to it, and so his title to the government is incontestable; *Thy throne is established*, it is a title without a flaw in it; and it is ancient, it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality, or power, was erected; as it will continue, when all other rule, principality, and power, shall be put down, 1 Cor. xv. 24. (2.) The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels, before all worlds; for he doeth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of Providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from those decrees which are fixed as the everlasting mountains; (Zech. vi. 1.) *Thou art from everlasting*, and therefore *thy throne is established of old*; because God himself was from everlasting, his throne and all the determinations of it were so too; for in an Eternal Mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

4. He reigns triumphantly, v. 3, 4. We have here, (1.) A threatening storm supposed; *The floods have lifted up, O Lord*, (to God himself the remembrance is made,) *the floods have lifted up their voice*, which speaks terror; nay, they have *lifted up their waves*, which speaks real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, Isa. lvii. 20. *The heathen rage*, (Ps. ii. 1.) and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be *tossed with tempests*, (Isa. liv. 11.) and the *floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid*, Ps. xviii. 4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts, but, if the Lord reigns there, even the winds and seas shall obey him. (2.) An immoveable anchor cast in this storm; (v. 4.) *The Lord himself is mightier*. Let this keep our minds fixed. [1.] That God is on high, above them, which denotes his safety; they cannot reach him; (xxix. 10.) it denotes also his sovereignty; they are ruled by him, they are overruled, and, wherein they rebel, overcome, Exod. xviii. 11. [2.] That he is *mightier*, does more *wondrous things* than the *noise of many waters*; they cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, The power of the church's enemies is but *as the noise of many waters*; there is more of sound than substance in it; *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but*

a noise, Jer. xli. 17. The church's friends are commonly worse frightened than hurt; God is mightier than this noise; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters, and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleases, command peace to the church, (Isa. 7.) peace in the soul, Isa. xxvi. 3. Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah are very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, Ps. xli. 1, 2.

5. He reigns in truth and holiness, v. 5. (1.) All his promises are inviolably faithful; *Thy testimonies are very sure*. As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to the promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is past, and all the saints may rely upon it. Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, would certainly have its accomplishment in due time. Those testimonies upon which the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints was built, were very sure, and would not fail them. (2.) All his people ought to be conscientiously pure; *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever*. God's church is his house; it is a holy house, cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service. The holiness of it is its beauty; nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an entire devotedness to his honour; and it is its strength and safety. It is the holiness of God's house that secures it against the many waters, and their noise; where there is purity, there shall be peace. Fashions change; and what is becoming at one time, is not at another; but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those who belong to it; it is perpetually decent; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and it is an appeal to God, as the Judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks, I. Conviction and terror to the persecutors, (v. 1. .11.) showing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them. II. Comfort and peace to the persecuted, (v. 12. .23.) assuring them, both from God's promise, and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would, in due time, appear to their joy, and the confusion of those who set themselves against them. In singing this psalm, we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion; but, at the same time, look upward to the righteous Judge, with an entire satisfaction, and look forward, to the end of all these things, with a pleasing hope.

1. **O** LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. 2. I lift up myself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. 3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4. How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? 5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thy heritage: 6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. 7. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9. He

that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye; shall he not see? 10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? 11. The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In these verses we have,

I. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, v. 1, 2. This speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall not he avenge them speedily? Luke xviii. 3, 7. Observe here,

1. The titles they give to God, for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal; *O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; and thou Judge of the earth*. We may with boldness appeal to him; for, (1.) He is Judge, supreme Judge, Judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law, gives sentence upon every man, according to his works, by the rule of that law. He has prepared his throne for judgment. He has indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him; (Rom. xiii. 4.) but he is the Avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable; his throne is the last refuge (the dernier resort, as the law speaks) of oppressed innocence. He is universal Judge, not of this city or country only, but *Judge of the earth*, of the whole earth: none are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alleged against an appeal to him in any court, that it is *coram non judice*—before a person not judicially qualified. (2.) He is just; as he has authority to avenge wrong, so it is his nature, and property, and honour. This also is implied in the title here given to him, and repeated with such an emphasis, *O God, to whom vengeance belongs*, who will not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good reason why we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, *Vengeance is mine*; and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative, and step into his throne, Rom. xii. 19. Let this alarm these who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled, There is a God, to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him who judges righteously.

2. What it is they ask of God; (1.) That he would *glorify himself*, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God was withdrawn, and had forsaken the earth; "Lord," say they, "show thyself; make them known that thou art, and that thou art ready to show thyself, strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee." The enemies thought God was conquered, because his people were; "Lord," say they, "lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength. Lift up thyself, to be seen, to be feared; and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down." (2.) That he would mortify the oppressors; *Render a reward to the proud*; that is, "Reckon with them for all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people." These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

II. An humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, v. 3. .6. Where observe,

1. The character of the enemies they complain against; they are wicked, they are *workers of iniquity*, they are bad, very bad, themselves, and

therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. Those are wicked indeed, and *workers of the worst iniquity*, lost to all honour and virtue, who are cruel to the innocent, and hate the righteous.

2. Their haughty barbarous carriage which they complain of. (1.) They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high, and talk big, they triumph, they speak loud things, they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own, and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do, and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion. They that speak highly of themselves; that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, Jude 15.

(2.) They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God's people because they are his; (v. 5.) "*They break in pieces thy people, O Lord; break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons, in pieces, and do all they can to afflict thine heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out.*" God's people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them, and seek their ruin. This is a very good plea with God, in our intercessions for the church; "Lord, it is thine, thou hast a property in it, it is thine heritage, thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues. And wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus?" (3.) They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves; (v. 6.) they not only oppress and impoverish, but they *slay, the widow and the stranger*; not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them, because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy. Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to; perhaps, because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

3. A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution; "Lord, how long shall they do thus?" And again, *How long?* When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

III. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered; (v. 7.) yet they say, *The Lord shall not see*. Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, "*The Lord shall not see*; he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too;" or they think they have managed it so artfully, under colour of justice and religion, perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, does not regard it, either as against justice, or as against his own people; he will never call them to an account for it: thus denying God's government of the world; bantering his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity; he that says, either that Jehovah the living God shall not see, or that the God of Jacob shall not regard, the injuries done to his people, *Nabal* is his name, and folly is with him; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion; (v. 8.) "*Understand, ye brutish among the people*, and let reason guide

you." Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers, and politicians, yet are really the *brutish among the people*; if they would but understand, they would believe. God, by the prophet, speaks, as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and show themselves so by understanding and considering; "*Ye fools, when will ye be wise*, so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account?" Note, None are so bad, but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them; none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise; while there is life, there is hope.

To evidence the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice, the psalmist argues,

(1.) From the works of creation, (v. 9.) the formation of human bodies, which, as it proves that there is a God, proves also that God has, infinitely and transcendently in himself, all those perfections that are in any creature. *He that planted the ear*, (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground,) *shall he not hear?* No doubt, he shall, more and better than we can. *He that formed the eye*, (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know, and let us know by their dissections,) *shall he not see?* Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? Note, [1.] The powers of nature, are all derived from the God of nature. See Exod. iv. 11. [2.] By the knowledge of ourselves we may be led a great way toward the knowledge of God; if, by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude, that, if we can see and hear, much more can God; then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls and their noble faculties. The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not; our God has no eyes or ears, as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears, because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him for our use of them.

(2.) He argues from the works of providence, v. 10. *He that chastises the heathen* for their polytheism and idolatry, shall not he much more correct his own people for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastises the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so? Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the world is? Does he regard, as King of nations, and shall he not much more regard, as the God of Jacob? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this; *He that instructs the nations*, that is, gives them his law, *shall not he correct*, shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain was the law given, if there will not be a judgment upon it. And it is true that the same word signifies to chastise and to instruct, because chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction should go along with chastisement.

(3.) He argues from the works of grace; *He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know?* He not only, as the God of nature, has given the light of reason, but, as the God of grace, has given the light of revelation, has showed man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that does this, shall he not know? Job xxviii. 23, 28. The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain. If all knowledge is *from God*, no doubt, all knowledge is *in God*. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, he not only confutes the atheists, who said, "*The Lord shall not see*, (v. 7.)

he will not take cognizance of what we do;" but awakens us all to consider, that God will take cognizance even of what we think; (v. 11.) *The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.* [1.] He knows those thoughts in particular, concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain; and laughs at the folly of those, who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. [2.] He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be, for the most part, vain; that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually. Even in good thoughts there is a fickleness and inconstancy, which may well be called *vanity*. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; 13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance: 15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it. 16. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17. Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. 20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? 21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22. But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people, here assures them that are troubled of rest. See 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints, from God's promises and his own experience.

I. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them; (v. 12.) *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.* Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name, and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people, (v. 5.) they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is, that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delights, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. x. 5-7. Now it is here promised.

1. That God's people shall get good by their sufferings; when he chastens them, he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a divine discipline; for *none teaches like God.*

Note, (1.) The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation, and improvement. (2.) When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence, they then both bespeak men blessed, and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption, and means of sanctification. When we are chastened, we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching that goes along with it, and is the exposition of it.

2. That they should see through their sufferings; (v. 13.) *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity.* Note, (1.) There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he has afflicted them. (2.) God *therefore* teaches his people by their troubles, that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles; that, being reformed, they might be relieved, and the affliction, having done its work, may be removed.

3. That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings; which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God; *Until the pit is digged*, or rather, while the pit is in digging, for the wicked, God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

4. That though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, v. 14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that, whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; he will not forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to, nor suffer himself to be dispossessed of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, Rom. xi. 1.

5. That, bad as things are, they shall mend, and though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel; (v. 15.) *Judgment shall return unto righteousness*; the seeming disorders of Providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or, at the furthest, in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to rights. Then *all the upright in heart shall be after it*; they shall follow it with their praises, and with entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of Divine Providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. *They shall walk after the Lord*, Hos. xi. 10. Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterward of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ, and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby; *Then judgment returned even to righteousness*, to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who, then, were as much countenanced as, before, they had been trampled on.

II. From his own experiences and observations.

1. He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and imperious men that had power in their hands, and abused it by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves *evil-doers*, and *workers of iniquity*; (v. 16.) they abandoned them-

selves to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a *throne of iniquity*, v. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil-doers, and a protection and praise to them that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity which, by the policy of its council, *frames mischief*, and by its sovereignty enacts it, and turns it into a law. Iniquity is daring enough, even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mischievous, is it when it is backed by a law! Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse, for being enacted by law; nor will it excuse those that practise it, to say, that they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity, having *framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous*, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri, nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemned the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies; they *framed mischief by a law*, when they obtained an impious edict against prayer, (Dan. vi. 7.) which when Daniel would not obey, they *assembled together against him*, (v. 11.) and *condemned his innocent blood to the lions*. The best benefactors of mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

2. The oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though, when they are persecuted, they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here; *His soul had almost dwelt in silence*; (v. 17.) he was at his wit's end, and knew not what to say or do; he was, in his own apprehension, at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave, that land of silence. St. Paul, in a like case, *received a sentence of death within himself*, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. He said, "*My foot slippeth*;" (v. 18.) I am going irrevocably, there is no remedy, I must fall, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul; my hope fails me, I do not find such firm footing for my faith as I have sometimes found." See Ps. lxxiii. 2. He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts within him concerning the case he was in, and the construction to be made of it; and concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it.

3. In this distress, they sought for help and succour, and some relief. (1.) They looked about for it, and were disappointed; (v. 16.) "*Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* Have I any friend who, in love to me, will appear for me? Has justice any friend who, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured cause?" He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, Eccl. iv. 1. When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity, *no man stood by him*, 2 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) They looked up, for it, v. 20. They humbly expostulate with God; "*Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?* Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? We know thou wilt not." A throne has fellowship with God, when it is a throne of justice, and answers the end of the erecting of it; for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him, their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resists them, or rises up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but when it becomes a

throne of iniquity, it has no longer fellowship with God. Far be it from the just and holy God, that he should be the Patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones; yea, though they be the *thrones of the house of David*.

4. They found succour and relief in God, and in him only; when other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful Friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him.

(1.) God helps at a dead lift; (v. 17.) "*When I had almost dwelt in silence*, then the Lord was my *Help*, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and *unless I had made him my Help*, by putting my trust in him, and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say."

(2.) God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits; (v. 18.) "*When I said, My foot slips into sin, into ruin, into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord, held me up*, kept me from falling, and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from mine excellency," lxxii. 4. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports; *Thy mercy*, the gifts of thy mercy, and my hope in thy mercy, *held me up*. God's right hand sustains his people, when they look on their right hand and on their left, and there is none to uphold; and we are then prepared for his gracious supports, when we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God, to acknowledge it, and to tell him how our foot slips.

(3.) Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits; (v. 19.) "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me*, which are noisy like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable; in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous, thoughts, *thy comforts delight my soul*; and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts, and keep my mind easy." The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul, when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts, they are songs to a heavy heart; but God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and that pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

5. God is, and will be, as a righteous Judge, the Patron and Protector of right, and the Punisher and Avenger of wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of and the experience of.

(1.) He will right the injured; (v. 22.) "*When none else will, or can, or dare, shelter me, The Lord is my Defence*, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them, and being ruined by them; and he is the *Rock of my refuge*, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger." God is his people's Refuge; to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe, and may be secure; he is the Rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immoveable, as a rock: natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

(2.) He will reckon with the injurious; (v. 23.) *He shall render to them their own iniquity*; he shall deal with them according to their deserts; and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people, shall be brought upon themselves: it follows, *He shall cut them off in their wickedness*. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompense of it. This the psalm

concludes with the triumphant assurance of; *Yea, the Lord our God*, who takes our part, and owns us for his, *shall cut them off* from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.

PSALM XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, (*Heb.* iii. and iv.) where it appears both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, (*Heb.* iv. 7.) that the day here spoken of, (v. 7.) is to be understood of the gospel-day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposes to us a rest beside that of Canaan. In singing psalms, it is intended, I. That we should *make melody unto the Lord*: this we are excited to do, and assisted in doing, being called upon to praise God, (v. 1, 2.) as a *great God*, (v. 3.) and as our gracious Benefactor, v. 6, 7. II. That we should *teach and admonish* ourselves, and *one another*; and we are taught and warned to *hear God's voice*, (v. 7.) and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness did, (v. 8, 9.) lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest, as they did, v. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with a holy reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.

1. **O** COME, let us sing unto the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. 5. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. 6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it, and cold in it. Observe,

1. How God is to be praised. 1. With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a *joyful noise*; (v. 1.) and again, v. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God, (such is the condescension of his grace,) that when we give glory to him, as a Being infinitely perfect and blessed, we should at the same time, *rejoice in him*, as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. 2. With humble reverence and a holy awe of him; (v. 6.) "*Let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before him*, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy." Though bodily exercise, alone, profits little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. 3. We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth, his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; *Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him, with psalms*; as those who are ourselves much affected with his greatness and godness, are for-

ward to own ourselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affection in others also. 4. We must praise God in concert, in the solemn assemblies; "*Come, let us sing*; let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone, but others with me. *Let us come together before his presence*, in the courts of his house, where his people are wont to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself." Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and whenever we have thanks to give, we must *come before God's presence*, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he has appointed.

II. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise; we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart. We must praise God,

1. Because he is a *great God*, and Sovereign Lord of all, v. 3. He is great, and therefore *greatly to be praised*. He is infinite and immense, and has all perfection in himself. (1.) He has great power; *he is a great King above all gods*; above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, *Ye are gods*; he manages them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable; above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can, and will, famish and vanquish them all. (2.) He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly specified; we reckon those great men who have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe; how how great then is that God whose *the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof*! not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestable dominion over all the creatures, and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all; (v. 4.) even *the deep places of the earth*, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, *are in his hand*; and *the height of the hills*, which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, *is his also*. This may be taken figuratively; the meanest of the children of men, who are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, who are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature, it is derived from God, and employed for him; (v. 5.) *The sea is his*, and all that is in it; (the waves fulfil his word;) it is his, for *he made it*, gathered its waters, and fixed its shores; *the dry land*, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself; it is his, for *his hands formed it*, when his word made the *dry land* appear. His being the Creator of all makes him, without dispute, the Owner of all. This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise; *he is a great God*; the *Mighty God* is one of his titles, and *God over all, blessed for evermore*; as Mediator, he is a *great King above all gods*; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him; *by him*, as the Eternal Word, *all things were made*, (John i. 3.) and it was fit he should be the Restorer and Reconciler of all, who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both; (Rev. x. 2.) and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must *worship and bow down*.

2. Because *he is our God*; not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us; (*v. 7.*) *He is our God*, and therefore it is expected we should praise him: who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should *be to him for a name and a praise*?

(1.) He is our Creator, and the Author of our being; we must *kneel before the Lord our Maker*, *v. 6.* Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God who made us and all the world; and who is therefore our rightful Proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

(2.) He is our Saviour, and the Author of our blessedness. He is here called *the Rock of our salvation*; (*v. 1.*) not only the Founder, but the very Foundation, of that Work of wonder, in whom it is built. *That Rock is Christ*; to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, *to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.*

(3.) We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; *we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*; all the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. We must praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so; *Israel are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*; and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The gospel-church is his flock, Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it; we, as Christians, are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well-provided for, to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be *glory in the churches*, (whether it be in the world or no,) *throughout all ages*, Eph. iii. 21.

7. ——— To-day, if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness*: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10. Forty years long was I grieved with *this generation*, and said, *It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways*: 11. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to these that sing gospel-psalms to live gospel-lives, and to hear the voice of God's word; otherwise, how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises?

Observe,

1. The duty required of all those that *are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand*. He expects that they *hear his voice*, for he has said, *My sheep hear my voice*, John x. 27. *We are his people*, say they. Are you so? Then *hear his voice*. If you call him *Master*, or *Lord*, then do the things which he says, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and, in both, of his Spirit; hear and heed; hear and yield. *Hear his voice*, and not the *voice of a stranger*. *If ye will hear his voice*; some take it as a wish, *Oh that ye would hear his voice!* That ye would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; like that, *If thou hadst known*; (Luke xix. 42.) that is, *Oh that thou hadst known!* Christ's voice must be heard to-

day; this the Apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel-day. While he is speaking to you, see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always; improve it therefore, *while it is called to-day*, Heb. iii. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing; *To-day*, if by faith you accept the gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance, nothing more dangerous than delay.

II. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is, hardness of heart. *If ye will hear his voice*, and profit by what you hear, then do not *harden your hearts*; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ, because *their hearts were hardened*; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands; and, if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, (he hardening it himself,) and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

III. The example they are warned by; which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness; "Take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan." *Be not, as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*, lxxviii. 8. Thus here, *Harden not your heart, as you did*, that is, your ancestors, *in the provocation*, or in *Meribah*, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, (Exod. xvii. 2-7.) *and in the day of temptation in the wilderness*, *v. 8.* So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a *day of temptation*, or *Massah*, the other name given to that place, (Exod. xvii. 7.) because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?* This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy, and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power, and tokens of his favour, as never any people had before or since. Note, 1. Days of temptation are days of provocation: nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it, because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin, if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God, and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now here observe,

(1.) The charge drawn up, in God's name, against the unbelieving Israelites, *v. 9, 10.* God here, many ages after, complains of their ill conduct toward him, with the expressions of high resentment. [1.] Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and provoked him; they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further security, before they would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; when those discouraged them, they pretested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promise, and would make a captain, and return into Egypt, Numb. xiv. 3, 4. This is called *rebel*

lion, Deut. i. 26, 32. [2.] The aggravation of this sin was, that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt; nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them: with them, even seeing was not believing, because they *hardened their hearts*, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. [3.] The causes of their sin; see what God imputed it to, *It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways*. Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. *First*, Of their ignorance; *They have not known my ways*. They saw his work, (v. 9.) and he made known his acts to them; (ciii. 7.) and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his providence, in which he walked toward them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk toward him; they did not know, they did not rightly understand, and therefore did not approve of, these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God, is, because they do not know them. *Secondly*, Of their mistake; *They do err in their heart*; they wander out of the way, in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. [4.] God's resentment of their sin; *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*. Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him; and God keeps an account how often, (Numb. xiv. 22.) and how long, they grieve him. See the patience of God toward provoking sinners; he was grieved with them 40 years, and yet those years ended in a triumphant entrance into Canaan, made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

(2.) The sentence past upon them for their sin; (v. 11.) "*Unto whom I swear in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest*, then say I am changeable and untrue;" see the sentence at large, Numb. xiv. 21, &c. Observe, [1.] Whence this sentence came; from the wrath of God; he *swore solemnly in his wrath*, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry, at sin and sinners, to show the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing, which deserves such a recompense of revenge as may be expected from a provoked Deity. [2.] What it was; *That they should not enter into his rest*, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them, a settlement for them and theirs; that none of them who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt, should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. [3.] How it was ratified; *I swore it*. It was not only a purpose, but a decree; the oath showed the *immutability of his counsel*; the Lord swore, and will not repent: it cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy. God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity, that lived in David's time, when this psalm was penned; let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest, if they were stiff-necked like them, God should be

provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, *This is my rest*: but it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it. There is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us, and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession, at least) bound for this rest; yet many that seem to be so, come short, and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin, it is unbelief, that sin against the remedy, against our appeal. They that, like Israel, distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest: so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it. *Let us therefore fear*, Heb. iv. 1.

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm is part of that which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren; (1 Chron. xvi. 7.) by which it appears, both that David was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David. Whether that long psalm was made first, and this afterward taken out of it, or this made first, and afterward borrowed to make up that, is not certain; but this is certain, that, though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks further, to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is, I. A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, v. 1.-9. II. Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, v. 10.-13. In singing this psalm, we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God and the grace of the gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in Christ's sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

1. **O** SING unto the LORD a new song; sing unto the LORD all the earth.
2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name: show forth his salvation from day to day.
3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.
4. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.
5. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.
6. Honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength;
8. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls toward God, with a high veneration for his majesty and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions are raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God,

I. With songs, v. 1, 2. Three times we are here called to *sing unto the Lord*; sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, is now, in the church militant, and ever shall be, in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often reminded of it, and stirred up to it. *Sing unto the Lord*, that is, "*Bless his name*, speak well of him, that you may bring

others to think well of him." 1. *Sing a new song*, an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than an old song, but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old or vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated, or out of date. 2. Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not *sing the Lord's song in* (would not sing it in) *a strange land*; but let *all the earth*, all that are *redeemed from the earth*, learn and sing *this new song*, Rev. xiv. 3. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this *new song put into their mouths*, shall have both cause and call to sing it. 3. Let the subject-matter of this song be his salvation; the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be showed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. 4. Let these songs be sung constantly, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day; it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that, under the influence of gospel-devotions, we may daily exemplify a gospel-conversation.

II. With sermons, (v. 3.) *Declare his glory among the heathen*, even his wonders among all people. 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright; in showing forth that salvation, we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was, in the Old Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a *glory to be revealed*; but, in the fulness of time, it was declared, and a full discovery made of that even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared *among the heathen, among all people*; the nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the gospel to every creature, is copied from this here; *Declare his glory among the heathen*.

III. With religious services, v. 7-9. Hitherto, though in every nation they that feared God, and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion: but, in gospel-times, the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, to worship him according to his appointment. *In every place incense shall be offered to his name*, Mal. i. 11. Zech. xiv. 17. Isa. lxvi. 23. This indeed spake mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God, and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing, from us or any creature, which was not his own before; much less be benefitted by it; but we must, in our best affections, adorations, and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for *God loves a cheerful giver*. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and, if not, will be recovered,

and yet if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly; (v. 7.) *Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion*, so some. As a king, he is clothed with robes of glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we must subscribe to both; *Thine is the kingdom*, and therefore *thine is the power and the glory*. "Give the glory to God, do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature." 3. We must *give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name*, that is, to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship, this is that which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings, and the Fountain of our being. 4. We must *bring an offering into his courts*. We must bring ourselves in the first place; the *offering up of the Gentiles*, Rom. xv. 16. We must offer up the *sacrifices of praise continually*, (Heb. xiii. 15.) must often appear before God in public worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must *worship him in the beauty of holiness*, in the solemn assembly where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule: we must worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must *fear before him*; all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God, and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise.

The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised, (v. 4.) and *to be feared*; great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and when the everlasting gospel is preached, this is it, *Fear God, and give glory to him*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7.

(1.) He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him; *He is to be feared above all gods*, all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather, all idols, *the gods of the nations*, v. 5. All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the One only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders: he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing: so the word used for idols signifies; for we know that *an idol is nothing in the world*, 1 Cor. viii. 4.

(2.) He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him: *The Lord made the heavens*, and all their hosts; they are *the work of his fingers*, (viii. 3.) so nicely, so curiously, are they made. The gods of the nations were all made gods, the creatures of men's fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, those lights of heaven, which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such.

(3.) He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world; among his angels in heaven, and his saints on earth; (v. 6.) *Splendour and majesty are before him*, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. *Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary*, both that above and this below. In God there is every thing that is awful, and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for *God is Love*, and experience his

strength, for *he is our Rock*. Let us therefore go forth, in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

10. Say among the heathen, *that the LORD reigneth*: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. 11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. 13. Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations, what to preach; or to those who had themselves received the gospel, what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to *say among the heathens*; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the Devil's kingdom, which began immediately after his ascension, and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

1. Let it be told that *the Lord reigns*, the Lord Christ reigns, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said *among the heathen* by Peter, Acts x. 42. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, *The Lord reigneth from the tree*; so Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it; meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, *The King of the Jews*. It was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to inquire after him that was *born King of the Jews*, Matth. ii. 2. Now let them know that he is come, and his kingdom is set up.

2. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement; *The world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved*. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, are owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, (so some,) that it *cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock; and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken*.

3. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous; *He shall judge the people righteously*, (v. 10.) *judge the world with righteousness and with his truth*, v. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be *in righteousness*, (Acts xvii. 31.) yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He says himself, *For judgment am I come into this world*; (John ix. 39.—xii. 31.) and declares that *all judgment was committed to him*, John v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth, signify, (1.) That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom

shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the divine nature and will. (2.) That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he has said. (3.) That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth, and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, *Art thou a king?* he answered, *For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*; (John xviii. 37.) for he rules by truth, commands men's wills by informing their judgments aright.

4. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh; that this King, this Judge, *standeth before the door; for he cometh, for he cometh*. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, Jude 14. Between this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, *Behold, he comes in the clouds*, (Rev. i. 7.) and he is not yet come. See 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c.

5. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand; (v. 11, 12.) *Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood*. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, (1.) That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and, as far as his grace and government are submitted to, will bring joy along with them; we have reason to give that place, that soul, joy, into which Christ was admitted. See an instance of both; (Acts viii.) when Samaria received the gospel, *there was great joy in that city*; (v. 8.) and when the eunuch was baptized, *he went on his way rejoicing*, v. 39. (2.) That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for though they come conquering and to conquer, yet they come peaceably. *Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh*; and again, *Hosanna, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David*, Mark xi. 9, 10. Not only *let the daughter of Zion rejoice that her King comes*, (Zech. ix. 9.) but let all rejoice. (3.) That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, *even the sea, and the field*; for as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made *subject to vanity*, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or other, first or last, be *delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 20, 21. (4.) That there will, in the first place, be *joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God*; for when the First-begotten was brought into the world, they sang their anthems to his praise, Luke ii. 14. (5.) That God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity ever so mean. *The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice*, I know not; but *he that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit*, and understands the language, the broken language, of the weakest.

PSALM XCVII.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune, with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of both; they are both penned, and are both to be sung, to his honour; and we make nothing of them, if we do not, in them, make melody with our hearts to the Lord Jesus. He it is that reigns, to the joy of all mankind; (v. 1.) and his government speaks, I. Terror to his enemies; for he is a Prince of inflexible justice, and irresistible power, v. 2..7. II. Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects; arising from his sovereign dominion, the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, v. 8..12. In singing this

psalm, we must be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer, must read the lot of his enemies, and think ourselves happy, if we are of those that *kiss the Son*.

1. **THE LORD** reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. 2. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. 5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth. 6. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him all ye gods.

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm, (v. 10.) is here said again, (v. 1.) and is made the subject of this psalm, and of psalm xcix. *The Lord reigns*; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event; every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs, both public and private, he performs the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ; who therefore is both the *Head of the church*, and *Head over all things to the church*.

The kingdom of Christ is so constituted, that,

I. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so, if it be not their own fault. *Let the earth rejoice*, for hereby it is *established*; (xcvi. 10.) it is honoured and enriched, and, in part, rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him, as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion, as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall, more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdoms: *let the multitude of isles, the many or great isles, be glad thereof*. This is applicable to our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; however, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the *isles of the Gentiles*, Gen. x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room.

All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government.

1. In the equity of it. There is an incontestable justice in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial; sometimes indeed *clouds and darkness are round about him*, his dispensations are altogether unaccountable, *his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters*; we are not aware of what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government; there is a depth in his counsels which we must not pretend to fathom; but still *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; a golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is the *habitation of his throne*. His *commandments are*, and will be, *all righteous*. *Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne*; (so Dr. Hammond,) for there-

fore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, xlv. 6. *The throne is established in righteousness*. Even the heavens declare his righteousness; (v. 5.) it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government, and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is incontestable; for who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? 1. 6.

2. In the extent of it in the upper and lower world.

(1.) All the men on earth are under his government; either he is served by them, or he serves himself by them. *All the people see his glory*, or may see it. The glory of God, in the face of Christ, was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less, among all people; the gospel was preached, for aught we know, in all languages, Acts ii. 5, 11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so *all the people saw his glory*. Have they not heard? Rom. x. 18.

(2.) All the angels in heaven are so; perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words, (v. 7.) *worship him all ye gods*, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world, at the ascension, with this charge, (Heb. i. 6.) *Let all the angels of God worship him*; which helps us to a key to this whole psalm, and shows us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth; *angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ, that he has such worshippers; and the honour of all good Christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

II. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some, and it is their own fault that it is so, v. 3-5, 7. Observe,

1. When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world, after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns to the *joy of the whole earth*, yet, as he has his subjects, so he has his enemies, (v. 3.) that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all; that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Matth. xxiii. 13. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called *hills*, (v. 5.) for their height and strength, and immoveable obstinacy. They were the *princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. Ps. ii. 2.

2. The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting of the apostles, and *forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles*, filled up their sin, and brought *wrath upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared, (1.) To consuming fire which goes before him, and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briers and thorns before him in battle, Isa. xxvii. 4. This fire of divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, v. 5. When our God appears as a consuming Fire, even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very pre-

sence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is *the Lord of the whole earth*, by whom all the children of men are manageable, and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent, that the Lord has *forsaken the earth*; but when he manifests his presence, they melt. (2.) To amazing *lightnings*, (v. 4.) which strike a terror upon many. The judgments of God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom, were such as all the world took notice of with terror; *The earth saw and trembled*, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nations by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which, like fire, wholly destroyed that people, and, like lightning, astonished all their neighbours; (Deut. xxix. 24.) but the heavens declare God's righteousness in it, and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

3. Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom; (v. 7.) *Confounded be all they who serve graven images*, the Gentile world, who *did service to them that by nature are no gods*, (Gal. iv. 8.) who boast themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did they that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? *Let them be ashamed that serve graven images*. (1.) This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may, by the power of Christ's gospel, be brought to serve the only living and true God, and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them. See Isa. ii. 20, 21. (2.) This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about three hundred years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters, that some think it was the revolution under Constantine that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us*, Rev. vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy are still in force against antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom; *Confounded be all they that worship graven images*. See Jer. xlvi. 13.

8. Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of thy judgments, O LORD. 9. For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all gods. 10. Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 12. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it has a dark side toward the Egyptians, so it has a bright side toward the Israel of God. It is set up in spite of opposition; and then *the earth saw and trembled*, (v. 4.) but *Zion heard, and was glad*, very glad, to hear of the conversion of some, and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; for, behold, thy king comes unto thee*, Zech. ix. 9. And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even *the daughters of*

Judah, rejoiced; the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command (v. 1.) is, *Let the earth rejoice*; but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

1. The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well *rejoice and be glad*;

1. Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice *because of thy judgments, O Lord*; which may take in both the judgments of his mouth, and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel, and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, "*Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth*"; (v. 9.) thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art *exalted far above all gods*; all deputed gods, that is, princes; all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, are the rejoicing of all the saints.

2. Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ, as a King, shall be sure of his protection; princes are the shields of the earth, Christ is so to his subjects, they may put their trust under his shadow, and rejoice in it; for, (v. 10.) *He preserves the souls of the saints*; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully *delivers them* many a time *out of the hand of the wicked*, their persecutors that thirst after their blood; for *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. But something more is meant than their lives; for they that will be his disciples must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indent for the securing of them. It is the *immortal soul* that Christ preserves, the *inward man*, which may be renewed more and more when the *outward man decays*. He will *preserve the souls of his saints* from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials; he will *deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one* that *seeks to devour them*; he will *preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

3. Because provision is made for their comfort; those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later; (v. 11.) *Light is sown for the righteous*, that is, *gladness for the upright in heart*. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are bid to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know, to their comfort, that *light is sown* for them, it is designed and prepared for them; what is sown will come up again in due time; though, like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a *harvest* in the *appointed weeks*. They that *sow in tears*, shall, without fail, *reap in joy*, cxxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples, at parting, (John xvi. 20.) *You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*. Gladness is sure to the *upright in heart*, to those only that are sincere in religion. *The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*. There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity.

11. The rules that are given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy; "*Ye that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that ye hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offen-*

sive to him, and will throw you out of his favour." Note, A true love to God will show itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of the saints should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin, and divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste for sensual pleasures.

2. Let the joy terminate in God; (*v. 12.*) *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*; let all the streams of comfort, which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the Fountain, and oblige us to *rejoice in the Lord*. All the lines of joy must meet in him as in the Centre. See Phil. iii. 3.—iv. 4.

3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving; *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*. Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and particularly the holiness of God. They that hate sin themselves, are glad that God does so, in hopes that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note, (1.) We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude, and perfection, of the divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he has confirmed with an oath *by his holiness*. (2.) We ought to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; not only give him the glory of it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us; and an unspeakable favour it will be, if, through grace, we are *partakers of his holiness*. It is God's holiness, which, above all his attributes, the angels celebrate; (*Isa. vi. 3.*) *Holy, holy, holy*. Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice, *at the remembrance of God's holiness*, Ps. xxx. 4.

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm is to the same purport with the two foregoing psalms; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting of it up in the world, and the bringing of the Gentiles to it. The Chaldee entitles it a prophetic psalm. It sets forth, I. The glory of the Redeemer, *v. 1. 3. II.* The joy of the redeemed, *v. 4. 9.* If we in a right manner give to Christ this glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy, in singing this psalm, we sing it with understanding. If they who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, who see these things accomplished, and share in the better things provided for us, *Heb. xi. 40.*

A psalm.

1. **SING** unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. 2. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. 3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

We are here called upon again to *sing unto the Lord a new song*, as before, *xvii. 1.* "Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have." Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, a *song of songs*. A song of praise for redeeming love is a *new song*, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a *new song*, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder, and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old.

Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things:

1. The wonders he has wrought; *He has done marvellous things, v. 1.* Note, The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it, from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, and the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it *done marvellous things*; it is all his doing, and it is *marvellous in our eyes*. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

2. The conquests he has won; *His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory*. Our Redeemer has surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He has subdued all the enemies that opposed it, has gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong holds, has *spoiled principalities and powers*, (*Col. ii. 15.*) has *taken the prey from the mighty*, (*Isa. xlix. 24.*) and given death his death's wound; he has gotten a clear and complete victory, not only for himself but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power, there was *none to help, none to uphold*, none that durst venture into the service; but his *right hand and his holy arm*, which are *therefore* always stretched out with good success, because they are never stretched out but in a good cause; these have *gotten him the victory*, have *brought him relief or deliverance*. God's power and faithfulness, called here *his right hand and his holy arm*, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so Dr. Hammond.

3. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he has revealed to us, and both by his Son; the gospel-revelation is that on which the gospel-kingdom is founded; *The word which God sent*, *Acts x. 36.* *The opening of the sealed book* is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise, (*Rev. v. 8.*) because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, (1.) The subject of this discovery; his salvation and his righteousness, *v. 3.* Righteousness and salvation are often put together, as *Isa. lxi. 10.—xlvii. 13.—li. 3, 6, 8.* Salvation denotes the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ. Or, the salvation includes all our gospel-privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel-duties; both are made known, for God has joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, *Rom. i. 17.* (2.) The plainness of this discovery; he has openly showed it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sun-beam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. (3.) The extent of this discovery; it is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only; *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*; *f. r* to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

4. The accomplishment of the prophecies and the promises of the Old Testament, in this; (*v. 3.*) *He has remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel*. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of the kindness he designed them in the latter days; and it was in pursuance of all those, that he raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, but the *Glory of his people Israel*, for he sent him, in the first place, to

bless *them*. God is said, in sending Christ, to *perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant*, Luke i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

4. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6. With trumpets, and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the LORD the King. 7. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8. Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together. 9. Before the LORD: for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

1. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have, benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy in it, and give God praise for it; *Make a joyful noise*, as before, xcv. 1, 2. *Make a loud noise*, as those that are affected with those glad tidings, and are desirous to affect others with them; *Rejoice and sing praise*; sing *Hosanna*; (Matth. xxi. 9.) sing *Hallelujahs*, Rev. xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne, and new kings are, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1 Kings i. 40. And let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with the *singers and players on instruments*, (Ps. lxxxvii. 7.—lxxxiii. 25.) as is usual in such solemnities. (1.) Let sacred songs attend the new King: “*Sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm*. Express your joy; thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others.” (2.) Let these be assed with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but, since it is a victorious King, whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, v. 6. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner; *Make a joyful noise to the Lord*, v. 4. *Sing to the Lord*; (v. 5.) do it *before the Lord, the King*, v. 6. Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy. When David danced before the ark, he pleaded that it *was before the Lord*; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice *before the Lord*, whenever we draw near to him, (Deut. xii. 12.) *before the Lord Jesus*, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church’s King, and our King.

2. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, v. 7-9. This is to the same purport with what we had before; (xcvi. 11-13.) *Let the sea roar*, and let that be called, not as it used to be, a *dreadful noise*, but a *joyful noise*; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, have quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods *lift up their voice, lift up their waves*, we must not construe that to be the sea *roaring against us*, but rather *rejoicing with us*. Let the *floods* express their joy, as men do when they *clap their hands*; and let the hills that tremble for fear, before God, when he came down to give the law at mount Sinai, dance for joy, before him, when his gospel is preached, and that

word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still, small voice; *Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord*. This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation; but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator, (xix. 1.) so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only *subsist* in their being, but *consist* in their order. It intimates likewise, that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore that he must look for his honour from *the sea and the floods*, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And perhaps respect is here had to the *new heavens* and the *new earth*, which we yet, according to his promise, look for; (2 Pet. iii. 13.) and this second mention of his coming, after the like, (Ps. xcvi.) may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined; then shall he come to *judge the world with righteousness*. In the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills, would rejoice, if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cuman Sibyl, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly, or basely, applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient præphets, which at that time were expected to be fulfilled; for he lived in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, a little before our Saviour’s birth. He owns they looked for the birth of a child from heaven, that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age.

Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto—

A new race descends from the lofty sky;

and that should take away sin;

Te duce, si qua manent seeleris vestigia nostri,

Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras—

Thine influence shall efface every stain of corruption,

And free the world from alarm.

Many other things he says of this long-looked-for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein:

Aspicie, venturo latentur ut omnia sæclo—

See, how this promis’d age makes all rejoice.

And if all rejoice, why should not we?

PSALM XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms; but those psalms looked forward to the times of the gospel, and prophesied of the graces and comforts of those times; this psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old Testament dispensation, and the manifestation of God’s glory and grace in that. The Jews were not, in expectation of the Messiah’s kingdom and the evangelical worship, to neglect the divine regimen they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them to see God reigning, and to worship before him according to the law of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come, must not lessen our esteem of good things present. To Israel indeed pertained the promises, which they were bound to believe; but to them pertained also the giving of the law, and the service of God, which they were also bound dutifully and conscientiously to attend to, Rom. ix. 4. And this they are called to do, in this psalm; where yet there is much of Christ, for the government of the church was in the hands of the Eternal Word before he was incarnate; and, besides, the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him, in consideration of these two things: I. The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, v. 1-5. II. Some instances of the happy administration of it, v. 6-9. In singing this psalm, we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel, which we have much more reason to do than they had who lived under the law.

1. **THE** LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved. 2. The LORD is great in Zion, and he is high above all people. 3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for it is holy*. 4. The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity: thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5. Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for he is holy*.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, That *the Lord reigns*. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that *the Lord lives*, but that *the Lord reigns*. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their King; and hence it is inferred, *Let the people tremble*, that is, (1.) Let even the subjects of this kingdom tremble; for the Old Testament dispensation had much of terror in it: at mount Sinai, Israel, and even Moses himself, did *exceedingly fear and quake*; and then God was *terrible in his holy places*; even when he appeared in his people's behalf, he did terrible things. But we are not now come to that *mount that burned with fire*, Heb. xii. 18. Now that *the Lord reigns*, let the earth rejoice: then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. (2.) Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble; for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre, or crush them with his iron rod. *The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation at it*; though they fret away all their spirits, their rage is all in vain, he will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, in despite of them; (ii. 1-6.) first, or last, he will make them *tremble*, Rev. vi. 15, &c. *The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved*. Those that submit to him, shall be established, and not moved; (xcvi. 10.) but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved; *the things which cannot be shaken, shall remain*, Heb. xii. 27. In these is *continuance*, Isa. lxiv. 5.

God's kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

1. God presided in the affairs of religion; *He sitteth between the cherubims*, (v. 1.) as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered; as on the mercy-seat, to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the *Shekinah*, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels: the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of holies was the presence-chamber. *The Lord is great in Zion*; (v. 2.) there he is known and praised, (lxxvi. 1, 2.) there he is served as great, more than any where else; *he is high there above all people*; as that which is high is exposed to view, and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore let them that dwell in Zion, and worship there, *praise thy great and terrible name*, and give thee the glory due unto it, *for it is holy*. The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends, and terrible to his enemies, v. 3. This is that which they above adore, *Holy, holy, holy*.

2. He was all in all, in their civil government, v. 4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither the tribes went up, so *there were set thrones of judgment*, (ccxii. 4, 5.) their government was a theocracy: he raised up David to rule over them,

(and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne,) and he is the king whose *strength loves judgment*. He is strong, all his strength he has from God, and *his strength* is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it *loves judgment*; he does justice with his power, and does it with delight; and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give *the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice*. He has power to crush, but *his strength loves judgment*; he does not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom, and with tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king; but they are here taught to look up to God, as him by whom their king reigns; *Thou dost establish equity*; God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed; and *thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob*; he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him, and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, 2 Chron. xix. 6.

Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it, (Dent. iv. 7, 8.) that they had *God so nigh unto them*, sitting between the cherubims, and that they had *statutes and judgments so righteous*, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob; from which he infers this command to that happy people; (v. 5.) *Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool*; give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established, both in church and state." Note, (1.) The greater the public mercies are, which we have a share in, the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God: the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise. (2.) When we draw nigh to God, to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. (3.) The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must *worship at his footstool*, at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubims; or, we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, *for he is holy*; and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it does on the angels themselves, Isa. vi. 2, 3.

6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name: they called upon the LORD, and he answered them. 7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. 8. Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. 9. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the LORD our God is holy.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially with reference to those that were, in their day, the prime leaders, and most active useful governors, of that people, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy or divine government began, (for they were employed to form Israel into a people,) and in the last of whom that form of government, in a great

measure, ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediate y their King as he had been, (1 Sam. viii. 7.) for now they would have a king, like all the nations. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be *among his priests*, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his sons; therefore the Jews call him the *Priest of the priests*.

Now concerning these three chief rulers observe,

I. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with Heaven, and whom God *knew by name*, Exod. xxxiii. 17.

Here is, (1.) Their gracious observance of God: no kingdom had men that honoured God so as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, [1.] By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was *among them that called on his name*; and for *this* they were all famous, *They called upon the Lord*; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, toward him was their desire, and on him their dependence. [2.] By their obedience; *They kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them*; they made conscience of their duty; and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing, that, unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Prov. xxviii. 9. Moses did all according to the pattern showed him; it is often repeated, *According to all that God commanded Moses, so did he*: Aaron and Samuel did likewise. Those were the greatest men and most honourable, that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies, and conforming to the rule of his word.

(2.) God's gracious acceptance of them; *He answered them*, and granted them the things which they called upon him for: they all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converses with another; (v. 7.) *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar*. He often spake to Samuel, from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him, and, probably, sometimes he spake to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him: however, to Moses and Aaron he often spake out of the famous *cloudy pillar*, Exod. xvi. 10. Numb. xii. 5. Israel are now reminded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to them that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

2. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. *Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead*; and when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1 Sam. vii. 9. This is here referred to; (v. 8.) *Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God*, and, at their prayer, *thou wast a God that forgavest the people they prayed for; and though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved*. "*Thou wast a God that was propitious for them*, (so Dr. Hammond,) for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, then, when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them, that it was just ready to break in upon

them, to their utter overthrow." These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel, more than in any other nation, tor which the people are again called upon to praise God; (v. 9.) *Exalt the Lord our God*, on account of what he has done for us formerly, as well as of late, and *worship at his holy hill of Zion*, on which he has now set his temple, and will shortly set his King, (ii. 6.) the former a type of the latter: there, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations, *for the Lord our God is holy*, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel.

PSALM C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express, and to excite, pious and devout affections toward God in our approach to him in holy ordinances: and if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps it was; but we say that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their economy, so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God, plainly extends it to the gospel-church. Here, I. We are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, v. 1, 2, 4. II. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, (v. 3.) and his mercy and truth, v. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

A psalm of praise.

1. **MAKE** a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before his presence with singing. 3. Know ye that the LORD he is God: *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture*. 4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5. For the LORD is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Here,

I. The exhortations to praise are very importunate: the psalm does indeed answer to the title, *A psalm of praise*; it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with, (v. 1.) *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, or all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth*. When all nations shall be disciplined, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom, which they were under, (as the four psalms before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah,) this psalm, perhaps, was intended for proselytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews' religion. However, we have here,

1. A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should *serve the Lord*, should devote ourselves to his service, and employ ourselves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should *come before his presence* in the ordinances which he has appointed, and in which he has promised to manifest himself, (v. 2.) that we should *enter into his gates, and into his courts*, (v. 4.) that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our fami-

les, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates, and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place, there the priests only went in to minister; but let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house, to which they were admitted, and where they gave their attendance.

2. Great encouragement given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully; (*v. 2.*) *Serve the Lord with gladness.* This intimates a prediction that in gospel-times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship; Let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel-worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness; we must be willing and forward to it; glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord, (*cxxii. 1.*) looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, *It is good to be here*; approaching to God in every duty, as to God our exceeding Joy, *xliii. 4.* We must come before his presence with singing, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise; (*v. 4.*) *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.* We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. *Be thankful to him, and bless his name*; that is, (*1.*) We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted, and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances. (*2.*) We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services; this golden thread must run through every duty, (*Heb. xiii. 15.*) for it is the work of angels. *In every thing give thanks*; in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

II. The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important, *v. 3, 5.* Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Note, Knowledge is the Mother of devotion, and of all obedience: blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know it; consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him." Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do, in all the acts of religious worship:

1. That the Lord he is God, the only living and true God; that he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the Fountain of all being; he is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent; the first Cause, and last End. The heathen worshipped the creature of their own fancy; the workmen made it, therefore it is not God; we worship him that made us and all the world; he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he has triumphed over.

2. That he is our Creator; *It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves.* I find that I am, but cannot say, *I am that I am*, and therefore must ask, Whence am I? Who made me? *Where is God my Maker?* And it is the Lord Jehovah. He gave us being, gave us this being; he is both the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. We did not, we could not, make ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own Cause, our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore he is our rightful Owner. The Mazorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, *He made us, and his we are*, or to him we belong. Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God made us, and not we our-

selves, therefore we are not our own, but his. He has an incontestable right to, and property in, us and all things. His we are, to be actuated by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory.

4. That he is our sovereign Ruler; *We are his people* or subjects, and he is our Prince, our Rector or Governor, that gives law to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver*; we are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are bidden.

5. That he is our bountiful Benefactor; we are not only his sheep, whom he is entitled to, but *the sheep of his pasture*, whom he takes care of; *the flock of his feeding*, so it may be read; therefore *the sheep of his hand*; at his disposal, because *the sheep of his pasture*, *xcv. 7.* He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness; (*v. 5.*) *The Lord is good*, and therefore does good; *his mercy is everlasting*; it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry; the saints, who are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be, to eternity, the glorified monuments of mercy.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; *His truth endures to all generations*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked; the promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

PSALM CI.

David was certainly the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow which he made to God, when he took upon him the charge of a family and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government, immediately after the death of Saul, as some think, or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David, as others think, is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and, by that means, good order, in it: but it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well. Here is, I. The general scope of David's vow, *v. 1, 2.* II. The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness, (*v. 3.. 5, 7, 8.*) and that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous, *v. 6.* Some think this may fitly be accommodated to Christ, the Son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by these rules, and who loves righteousness, and hates wickedness. In singing this psalm, families, both governors and governed, should teach and admonish, and engage themselves and one another to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them, and God's presence with them.

A psalm of David.

1. **I** WILL sing of mercy and judgment unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. 2. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O! when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me. 4. A forward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. 6. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may

dwelt with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 3. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate, and a good master of a family; if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to a universal reformation. Observe,

I. The chosen subject of the psalm; (*v. 1.*) *I will sing of mercy and judgment*; that is, 1. Of *God's* mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of Providence that had respected him since he was first anointed to be king; during which time he had met with many a rebuke, and much hardship, on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him, and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note, (1.) God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed—*mercy and judgment*; God has set the one over-against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sun-shine. It was so with David and his family; when there was mercy in the return of the ark, there was judgment in the death of Uzzah. (2.) When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee paraphrase of this is observable; *If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or If thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymns for all.* Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or, 2. It may be understood of *David's* mercy and judgment; he would, in this psalm, promise to be merciful, and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly, and love mercy, is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him; and this, in consideration of the various providences of God that had occurred to him. Family-mercies, and family-afflictions, are both of them calls to family-religion. David puts his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind, and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others, and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

II. The general resolution David took up to conduct himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, *v. 2.* We have here, 1. A good purpose concerning his conversation—concerning his conversation in general, how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant, bind himself to his good behaviour—and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat in the throne, but how he would *walk within his house*, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad, and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are

in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay rather, they are more concerned to set a good example of *ruling their own houses well*, 1 Tim. iii. 4. When David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He resolves, (1.) To act conscientiously, and with integrity, to *walk in a perfect way*, in the way of God's commandments, that is a *perfect way*, for the law of the Lord is perfect. Thus he will walk in, *with a perfect heart*, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a *perfect way*, *with a perfect heart*. (2.) To act considerably, and with discretion; *I will behave myself wisely*; *I will understand*, or *instruct myself* in a perfect way; so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence, in the ways of Christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of *behaving ourselves wisely*; but, while we keep to the good way, we must be *wise as serpents*. 2. Here is a good prayer; *O when wilt thou come unto me!* Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God come to him, and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence, that walk *with a perfect heart*, in a *perfect way*. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David, (1 Sam. xviii. 14.) we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, *behaved himself wisely in all his ways*; and, as he prayed, *the Lord was with him*.

III. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself; (*v. 3.*) *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"*; I will not design or aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God, and the public welfare." He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business, we must see that that be right and good which we set our eyes upon, and not any forbidden fruit; and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man, that he shuts his eyes from seeing evil, Isa. xxxiii. 15. "Nay, I hate the works of evil, them that turn aside from the paths of equity; (Job xxxi. 7.) not only I avoid it, but I abhor it, it shall not cleave to me." If any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly."

IV. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, nor show them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him; for they who hated to be reformed would certainly hinder every thing that is good.

When he comes to mention particulars, he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house; nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he mentions those sinners who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution, and to behave himself wisely.

1. He will have nothing to do with spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief

they do to those they have a pique against; (v. 4.) "*A froward heart, one that delights to be cross and perverse, shall depart from me, as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. I will not know,*" that is, "I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a wicked person; for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump."

2. Nor with slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation secretly; (v. 5.) "*Whoso privily slanders his neighbour, either raises, or spreads, false stories, to the prejudice of his good name, him will I cut off from my family and court.*" Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince; *If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, Prov. xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will prevent the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him; he will punish not only those that falsely accuse one another in open court, but those that privily slander one another. I wish David had remembered this vow, in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba.

3. Nor with haughty, conceited, ambitious, people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, *for only by pride comes contention*; "*Therefore, him that has a high look, and a proud heart, will I not suffer*; I will have no patience with them that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain that they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families." God resists the proud, and so will David.

4. Nor with false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds; (v. 7.) "*He that worketh deceit, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet, as soon as he is discovered, he shall not dwell within my house.*" Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skillful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such as agents for him; *He that tells lies, shall not tarry in my sight*, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the great day, banish from his presence *all that love and make a lie*, Rev. xxii. 15.

V. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good; (v. 6.) *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land*. In choosing his servants, and ministers of state, he kept to the land of Israel, and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the *faithful in the land*, for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out, for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them, and act under them. *He that walks in a perfect way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, he shall serve me*: the kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and if any man is better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it, or else his judgment was imposed upon, when he made Abithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such

servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David has his eyes upon the *faithful in the land*; his secret is with them, and they *shall dwell with him*. Saul chose servants for their goodness, (1 Sam. viii. 16.) but David for their goodness.

Lastly, His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court; (v. 8.) "*I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them.*" He would do his utmost to *destroy all the wicked*, so that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked. He would do it early; he would lose no time, and spare no pains, he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do any thing to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at, was, not only the securing of his own government, and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*: not Jerusalem only, but the whole land was the *city of the Lord*: so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the *city of the Lord* to be purged from *wicked doers*, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, toward so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the New Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

PSALM CII.

Some think that David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet, penned it for the use of the church, when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruin of Zion, and of a time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood by books, *Dan. ix. 2*. Or perhaps the psalmist was himself in great affliction, which he complains of in the beginning of this psalm, but (as in *P. lxxvii.* and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, how much soever it was now distressed and threatened. But it is clear, from the application of v. 25, 26. to Christ, (*Heb. i. 10. . 12.*) that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction, or of the afflictions of his church for his sake. In the psalm we have, I. A sorrowful complaint, which the psalmist makes either for himself or in the name of the church, of great afflictions, which were very pressing, v. 1. . 11. II. Seasonable comfort fetched in against these grievances, 1. From the eternity of God, v. 12, 24, 27. 2. From a believing prospect of the deliverance which God would, in due time, work for his afflicted church, (v. 13. . 22.) and the continuance of it in the world, v. 28. In singing this psalm, if we have not occasion to make the same complaints, yet we may take occasion to sympathize with those that have, and then the comfortable part of this psalm will be the more comfortable to us in the singing of it.

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

1. **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call, answer me speedily. 3. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth. 4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the

desert. 7. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top. 8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping; 10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable: it is *a prayer of the afflicted*; it was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church, and for it; on those that are of a public spirit, afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for *whatsoever things were written before time, were written designedly for our use*. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths; (Hos. xiv. 2.) *Take with you words*. Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted; let them set, not their hands, but their hearts, to it, and present it to God. Note, 1. It is often the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflicted. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to *pour out our complaints before the Lord*; which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him, and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates, also, what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburthen itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs.

Such a representation we have here; in which,

1. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, v. 1, 2. When we pray in our affliction, 1. It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for, if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye, that our prayer may *come unto God, even to his ears*, (xviii. 6.) and, in order to that, let us *lift up the prayer*, and our souls with it. 2. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a *prayer in faith*, we may in faith say, *Hear my prayer, O Lord*; (1.) “Manifest thyself to me; *hide not thy face from me in displeasure, when I am in trouble*. If thou dost not immediately free me, yet let me know that thou favour’st me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me.” God’s hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man, even in his prosperity; (xxx. 7.) *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*; but if, when we are *in trouble*, God *hides his face*, the case is sad indeed. (2.) “Manifest thyself for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of, and in pursuit of; answer me speedily, even in the day when I call.” When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be thus pressing in prayer, yet with humility and patience.

II. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions.

1. His body was macerated and emaciated, and he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented

by *making fat the bones*, and the *bones flourishing like an herb*, so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary; *My bones are burnt as a hearth*, (v. 3.) *they cleave to my skin*, (v. 5.) *my heart is smitten, and withered like grass*; (v. 4.) it touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. *I am withered like grass*, (v. 11.) scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange; the body is like grass, weak, and of the earth, no wonder then that it withers.

2. He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit. He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles, that he *forgot to eat his bread*; (v. 4.) he had no appetite to his necessary food, nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul, the delights of sense will be sapless things. He was always *sighing and groaning*, as one pressed above measure, (v. 5.) and this wasted him, and exhausted his spirits; he affected solitude, as melancholy people do; his friends deserted him, and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company; (v. 6, 7.) “*I am like a pelican of the wilderness, or a bittern*, (so some,) *that make a doleful noise; I am like an owl, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the house-top*. I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles and bemoaning myself.” Those who do thus, when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction, we should *sit alone*, to consider our ways, (Lam. iii. 28.) but not *sit alone*, to indulge an inordinate grief.

3. He was evil spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil was said against him. When his friends went off from him, his foes set themselves against him; (v. 8.) *Mine enemies reproach me all the day*; designing thereby both to create vexation to himself, (for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach,) and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him, they shot these arrows at him, even *bitter words*; in this they were unwearied, they did it *all the day*, it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous; *They are mad against me*, and very obstinate and implacable; *They are sworn against me*; as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, *They have sworn against me* as accusers, to take away my life.

4. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God’s displeasure; (v. 9, 10.) “*I have eaten ashes like bread*; instead of eating my bread, I have laid down in dust and ashes, and *I have mingled my drink with weeping*; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking, I have only eased myself with weeping.” And what is the matter? He tells us; (v. 10.) *Because of thy wrath*. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him, as the wrath of God which he was under the apprehensions of, as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the *wormwood and the gall*, in the affliction and the misery; *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down*; as that which we cast to the ground, with a design to dash it to pieces, we lift up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, “Thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour, and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief, and makes it the more grievous.” We must eye the hand of God both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away.” 5. He looked upon himself as a *dying man*, *My days are consumed like smoke*, (v. 3.) which vanishes away quickly. Or, *They are consumed in smoke*, of which nothing remains.

they are *like a shadow that declines*, (v. 11.) like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of approaching night. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizes, making public grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes like the psalmist's body here, *withered and harched*, nay, like *dead and dry bones*. The church sometimes is forced *into the wilderness*, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

12. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13. Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. 19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; 21. To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints; for *unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*, so that though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God; but he has many considerations to revive himself with.

I. We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts dying; but God is an everliving, everlasting, God; (v. 12.) "*My days are like a shadow*; there is no remedy, night is coming upon me; but thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever. Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but thou our God diest not; what threatened us cannot touch thee; our names will be written in the dust, and buried in oblivion, but *thy remembrance shall be unto all generations*, to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured." A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the Eternal Mind. God *endures for ever*, his church's faithful Patron and Protector; and his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

II. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour; (v. 13.) *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion*; the

hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God; "*Thou wilt have mercy upon Zion*; for she is become an object of thy pity;" and upon the power of God, "*Thou shalt arise and have mercy, shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies*;" *the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this*. That which is very encouraging, is, that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which Infinite Wisdom has appointed, and therefore it is the best time; at the time which Eternal Truth has fixed it to; and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten or further adjourned. At the end of 70 years, the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come.

Zion was now in ruins, that is, the temple that was built in the city of David; the favouring of Zion is the building of the temple up again, as it is explained, v. 16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays, (Dan. ix. 17.) *Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate*. The building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire. No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church privileges.

Now this is here wished for, and longed for,

1. Because it would be a great rejoicing to Zion's friends; (v. 14.) *Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple*, though they were thrown down and scattered, and *favour the dust*, the very rubbish and ruins, of it. Observe here, that when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those who truly love the church of God, love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to show that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are *waiting for the salvation of the Lord*.

2. Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, v. 15. It will be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, at least, of their conviction; for *so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord*, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory; they shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it, when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, We will go with you, for we have *seen that God is with you*, Zech. viii. 23. Thus it is said, (Esth. viii. 17.) that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

3. Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God; (v. 16.) *When the Lord shall build up Zion*; they take it for granted it will be done, for God himself has undertaken it, and *he shall then appear in his glory*; and, for that reason, all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, *Father, glorify thy name*, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

III. The prayers of God's people now seem to be

slighted, and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed, and greatly encouraged; (v. 17.) *He will regard the prayer of the destitute.* It was said, (v. 16.) that God will *appear in his glory*, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, v. 15. When great men *appear in their glory*, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply themselves to them; but the great God will not do so. Observe, 1. The meanness of the petitioners; they are the *destitute*: it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub, or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things; the poor, the weak, the desolate, the stript; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees; destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. v. 5. 2. The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness; He will regard their prayer, and will look at it, will peruse their petition, (2 Chron. vi. 40.) and he *will not despise their prayer*. More is implied than is expressed: he will value it, and be well pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it. But it is thus expressed, because others despise their praying; they themselves fear God will despise it; and he was thought to despise it, while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an Advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law.

This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer; (v. 18.) *This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair*, though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten, because they have not an answer to them immediately. The experiences of others should be our encouragements to seek unto God and trust in him. And, if we have the comfort of the experiences of others, it is fit that we should give God the glory of them; *The people which shall be created shall praise the Lord* for what he has done both for them and for their predecessors; many that are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of *first-fruits of his creatures*, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

IV. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly, seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge; (v. 19, 20.) God has *looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven*, where he has prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place; thence did the Lord behold the earth, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is, or can be, hid from his all-seeing eye; he looks down, not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners; (which we should desire to be out of the hearing of) and not only to hear them, but to help them, to loose those that are appointed to death, then when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; God *heard their groaning* there, as he did when they were in Egypt, (Exod. iii. 7, 9.) and came down to deliver them.

God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoners' groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoners' bonds, even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double-shackled. We have an instance in Peter, Acts xii. 6.

Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion, will help, 1. *To declare the name of the Lord in Zion*, and to make it appear that he answers his name which he himself proclaimed, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*, and this declaration (of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, v. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name. God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, that they may declare his name in Zion, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion, (cxxxvii. 3, 4.) and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem, that they might sing them there. For this end, God gives liberty from bondage; *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name*; (cxlii. 7.) for this, he gives life from the dead; *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, cxix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God; (v. 22.) *When the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem*, (as they were, after their return out of Babylon,) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to *serve the Lord*. This was fulfilled, (Ezra vi. 21.) where we find that not only the children of Israel that were come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves from them among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy. But it may look further, at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. 25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe,

1. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in, of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon; (v. 23.) *He weakened my strength in the way*. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end; the legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of

that nation was weakened, and, in all appearance, its day shortened, for they said, *Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts*, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. And then what comes of the promise, that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time. 1. To be sickly; bodily distempers soon *weaken our strength in the way*, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. 2. To be short-lived; where the former is felt, this is feared; when, in the midst of our days, according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the *number of our months should be cut off in the midst*; and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and time are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, to have it weakened; and of those that could very ill be spared, to have their days shortened.

II. A prayer for the continuance of it; (v. 24.) "*O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days*; let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come, *Destroy it not, for that blessing is in her*," Isa. lxxv. 8. She is a criminal, but, for the sake of that blessing which is in her, she pleads for a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not *take us away in the midst of our days*, but that, if it be his will, he would spare us to do him further service, and to be made ripier for heaven.

III. A plea to enforce this prayer, taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, v. 25-27. The apostle quotes these verses, (Heb. i. 10-12.) and tells us; *He saith this to the Son*, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. *Thy years are throughout all generations*, and cannot be shortened. It is likewise comfortable, in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everlasting God, and that therefore, if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how to illustrate the eternity of the Creator; he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

1. God *made the world*, and therefore had a being before it *from eternity*; the Son of God, the Eternal Word, made the world. It is expressly said, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore the same was in the beginning*, from eternity, *with God, and was God*, John i. 1-3. Col. i. 16. Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both, include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son; (v. 25.) "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth*, that is founded *on the seas*, and *on the floods*, and yet it abides; much more shall the church, which is *built upon a rock*. *The heavens are the work of thy hands*, and by thee are all their motions and influences directed;" God is therefore the Fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be intrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both, and is entitled to both.

2. God will *unmake the world again*, and therefore shall have a being *to eternity*; (v. 26, 27.) *They*

shall perish, for *thou shalt change them* by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore, no doubt, *thou shalt endure*; *thou art the same*. God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said, one would think, were enough to decide the controversy immediately, and to determine, as for God and Christ. For, (1.) A portion in the creature is fading and dying; *They shall perish*, they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming when *the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*; and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it; Heaven and earth shall *wax old as a garment*; not by a gradual decay, but, when the set time comes, they shall be set aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for; *As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed*; not annihilated, but altered, it may be, so that they shall not be at all the same, but *new heavens and a new earth*. See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth; he can change them as he pleases, and when he pleases, and the constant changes they are subject to, in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when *the heavens and time shall be no more*. (2.) A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting; *Thou art the same*, subject to no change; and *thy years have no end*, v. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise; the same to his church in captivity that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her Strength and her Life; he is the same, and has said, *Because I live, ye shall live also*. Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the New Testament Babylon.

IV. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer; (v. 28.) *The children of thy servants shall continue*; since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the Head, we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and distempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to *wear out the saints of the Most High* will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, a succession, of professing people; the church, as well as the world, is under the influence of that blessing, *Be fruitful and multiply*. *These children shall continue*, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, that is, in his service, and by his grace; the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but, as one generation of good people passes away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

PSALM CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, I. Stirs up himself and his own soul to praise God, (v. 1, 2.) for his favour to him in particular, (v. 3-5.) to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is, and will be, just, and kind, and constant, (v. 6-18.) and for his government of the world, v. 19. II. He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God, in praising him, v. 20-22. In singing this psalm, we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

A psalm of David.

1. **B**LESS the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul,

and forget not all his benefits: 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; 5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

I. How he stirs up himself to the duty of praise, v. 1, 2. 1. It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of, for he is the Fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns; it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise, *giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*. 2. It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, *and all that is within us*. We make nothing of our religious performances, if we do not make heart-work of them; if *that which is within us*, nay, if *all that is within us*, be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. 3. In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him; *Forget not all his benefits*. If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust as well as unkind; since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable; "O my soul, to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but surely thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldest not have forgotten any."

II. How he furnishes himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting; "Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee."

1. "He has pardoned thy sins, (v. 3.) he has forgiven, and *does forgive, all thine iniquities*." This is mentioned first, because, by the pardon of sin, that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; *He has forgiven all our trespasses*. It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

2. "He has cured thy sickness." The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it is its disorder, and threatens its death; this is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together, for as for God, his work is perfect, and not done by halves; if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made Righteousness to any soul, he is made Sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

3. "He has rescued thee from danger." A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness; *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction*, (v. 4.) from the destroyer; *from hell*, so the Chaldee; from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out to him who has obtained *eternal redemption for us*. See Job xxxiii. 24, 25.

4. "He has not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life."

(1.) "He has given thee true honour and great

honour; no less than a crown; *He crowns thee with his loving-kindness and tender mercies*;" and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? *This honour have all his saints*. What is the crown of glory but God's favour?

(2.) "He has given thee true pleasure; *He satisfies thy mouth with good things*;" (v. 5.) It is only the favour and grace of God, that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer to its desires; nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to *fill its treasures*; (Prov. viii. 21.) other things will surfeit, but not *satiate*, Eccl. vi. 7. Isa. lv. 2.

(3.) "He has given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's*." The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is near 100 years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting time,) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to *return to the days of their youth*, Job xxxiii. 25.

6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all *that are* oppressed. 7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9. He will not always chide; neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. 10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12. As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13. Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that *we are* dust. 15. *As for* man, his days *are* as grass; as a flower of the field, *so* he flourisheth: 16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17. But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad, and takes notice of his favour to others also, for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; all the saints being fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessings.

I. Truly God is good to all; (v. 6.) *He executes righteousness and judgment*, not only for his own people, but for *all that are oppressed*; for, even in common providence, he is the Patron of wronged innocency, and, one way or other, will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.

II. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He has revealed himself and his grace to us; (v. 7.) *He made known his ways unto Moses*, and by him *his acts to the children of Israel*; not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God restores us to himself by revealing himself to us, and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He has made known his acts and his ways, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond. Or, by his *ways* we may understand his *precepts*, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs, (as the word signifies,) his promises and purposes as to what he will do with us. Thus fairly does God deal with us.

2. He has never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so; (v. 8.) *The Lord is merciful and gracious*; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) in answer to Moses's request, (ch. xxxiii. 13.) *I beseech thee, show me thy way, that I may know thee*. It is my way, says God, to pardon sin. [1.] He is not soon angry, v. 8. He is *slow to anger*, not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing, that he may give space to repent, and does not speedily execute the sentence of his law. He could not be thus *slow to anger*, if he were not *plenteous in mercy*, the very *Father of mercies*. [2.] He is not long angry; for, (v. 9.) *He will not always chide*, though we always offend, and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins, by the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no not for our sins, but, after the spirit of bondage, will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God, who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? *He will not keep his anger for ever*, against his own people, but will gather them with *everlasting mercies*, Isa. liv. 8.—vii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we, for our parts, must own that *he has not dealt with us after our sins*, v. 10. The scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal, that it is true, that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we had been in hell long ago; but *he has not rewarded us after our iniquities*; so they will say who know what sin deserves. He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which should make us think the worse, and not the better, of sin; for *God's patience should lead us to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4.

3. He has pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, (v. 3.) but our transgressions; (v. 12.) though it is of our own benefit, by the pardoning mercy of God, that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, (1.) The transcendent riches of God's mercy; (v. 11.) *As the heaven is high above the earth*, (so high, that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse,) so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most: so much above and beyond them, that there is no proportion at all between

them; the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least tokens of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves *less than the least of all God's mercies*, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus great *toward them that fear him*, not toward them that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. (2.) The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy; (v. 12.) *As far as the east is from the west*, (which two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes,) *so far has he removed our transgressions from us*, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them, they shall be sought for, and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He has pitied our sorrows, v. 13, 14. Observe, (1.) Whom he pities; *them that fear him*, all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity on account of the grievances to which they are not only born, but born again. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet *trembling at his word*; those he pities, Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. (2.) How he pities; *as a father pities his children*, and does them good as there is occasion. God is a Father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are forward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; pities them (Isa. lxvi. 13.) when they are fallen, and helps them up again; pities them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them; pities them when they are wronged, and rights them; thus *the Lord pitieth them that fear him*. (3.) Why he pities; *for he knows our frame*. He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us; and, having himself made man of the dust, *he remembered that he is dust*, not only by constitution, but by sentence; *Dust thou art*. He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the feebleness of our souls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us, how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us; in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He has perpetuated his covenant-mercy, and thereby provided relief for our frailty, v. 15-18. See here,

(1.) How short man's life is, and of what uncertain continuance; the lives even of great men and good men are so; and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them; *As for man, his days are as grass*, which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers, and returns to it again. See Isa. xl. 6, 7. Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass, he flourishes and looks gay; yet then he is but *like a flower of the field*, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and, though in its own nature withering, will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden wall, and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be crept and trod on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of itself, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection, a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked for, *passes over it, and it is gone*; it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, *and the place thereof*,

which was proud of it, now *knows it no more*. Such a thing is in man: God considers it, and pities him; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another.

(2.) How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people; (v. 17, 18.) it will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe,

[1.] The description of those to whom this mercy belongs; they are such as fear God, such as are truly religious, from principle. *First*, They live a life of faith; for they *keep God's covenant*, having taken hold of it, they keep hold of it, fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. *Secondly*, They live a life of obedience; they *remember his commandments to do them*, else they do not *keep his covenant*. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who they are that have a good memory, as well as a *good understanding*, (cxi. 10.) those that *remember God's commandments*, not to talk of them, but *to do them*, and to be ruled by them.

[2.] The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these: it will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will outlive it; *First*, To their souls, which are immortal, to them the mercy of the Lord is *from everlasting to everlasting*; from everlasting in the councils of it, to everlasting in the consequences of it; in their election before the world was, and their glorification when this world shall be no more; for they are predestinated to the *inheritance*, (Eph. i. 11.) and *look for the mercy of the Lord*, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life. *Secondly*, To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time; (cii. 28.) *His righteousness*, the truth of his promise, shall be *unto children's children*; provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors' piety, and *keep his covenant*, as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them, even to a *thousand generations*.

19. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. 22. Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

Here is,

I. The doctrine of universal providence laid down, v. 19. He has secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general, he secures by common providence. *The Lord has a throne of his own*, a throne of glory, a throne of government; he that made all, rules all, and both by a word of power; *he has prepared his throne*, has fixed and established it that it cannot be shaken; he has fore-ordained all the measures of his government, and does all according to the counsel of his own will. *He has prepared it in the heavens*, above us, and out of sight; for he *holds back the face of his throne*, and *spreads a cloud upon it*, (Job xxvi. 9.) yet can himself *judge through the dark cloud*, Job xxii. 13. Hence *the heavens are said to rule*, (Dan. iv. 26.) and we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their

dominion, Job xxxviii. 33. Gen. i. 16. But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him, (*our Father which art in heaven*,) yet *his kingdom rules over all*. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs, of this lower world, and disposes all persons and things according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; (Dan. iv. 35.) *His kingdom rules over all kings*, and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

II. The duty of universal praise inferred from it: if all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage.

1. Let the holy angels praise him; (v. 20, 21.) *Bless the Lord, ye his angels*; and again, *Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his*. David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it: not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels; thus he quickens himself and others to the duty, with this consideration, That it is the work of angels; and comforts himself, in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty, with this consideration, That there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's house, and are still praising him. In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe, (1.) How well qualified they are for the post they are in. They are able; for they *excel in strength*; they are *mighty in strength*, so the word is: they are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness. And they are as willing as they are able; they are willing to *know* their work; for they *hearken to the voice of his word*; they stand expecting commission and instructions from their great Lord, and *always behold his face*, (Matth. xviii. 10.) that they may take the first intimation of his mind. They are willing to *do* their work; they *do his commandments*, (v. 20.) they *do his pleasure*, (v. 21.) they dispute not any divine commands, but readily address themselves to the execution of them: nor do they delay, but fly swiftly.

They do his commandments at hearing; or, *as soon as they hear the voice of his word*; so Dr. Hammond. *To obey is better than sacrifice*; for angels obey, but do not sacrifice. (2.) What their service is; they are *his angels*, and *ministers of his*; his, for he made them, and made them for himself; his, for he employs them, though he does not need them; his, for he is their Owner and Lord, they belong to him, and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers, and seamen, and all good subjects, serve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state, and those of the household.

[1.] The angels occasionally serve God in this lower world; they *do his commandments*, go on his errands, (Dan. ix. 21.) fight his battles, (2 Kings vi. 17.) and minister for the good of his people, Heb. i. 14. [2.] They *continually praise him* in the upper world; they began betimes to do it, (Job xxxviii. 7.) and it is still their business, from which they rest not *day or night*, Rev. iv. 8. It is God's glory, that he has such attendants, but more his glory, that he neither needs them, nor is benefited by them.

2. Let *all his works* praise him; (v. 22.) *all, in all places of his dominion*; for, because they are his works, they are under his dominion; and they were made, and are ruled, that they may be unto him *for a name and a praise*. *All his works*, that is, all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works also, let them praise him objectively, though they cannot actually do it; (exlv. 10.) yet all this shall not excuse David from

doing it, but rather excite him to do it the more cheerfully, that he may bear a part in this concert; for he concludes, *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, as he began, *v. 1. Blessing God, and giving him glory*, must be the alpha and the omega of all our services. He began with *Bless the Lord, O my soul*; and, when he had penned and sung this excellent hymn to his honour, he does not say, Now, O my soul, thou hast blessed the Lord, sit down and rest thee, but, *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, yet more and more. When we have done ever so much in the service of God, yet still we must stir up ourselves to do more. God's praise is a subject that will never be exhausted, and therefore we must never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

PSALM CIV.

It is very probable that this psalm was penned by the same hand, and at the same time, as the former; for as that ended, this begins, with *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, and concludes with it too. The style, indeed, is somewhat different, because the matter is so: the scope of the foregoing psalm was to celebrate the goodness of God, and his tender mercy and compassion, to which a soft and sweet style was most agreeable: the scope of this is to celebrate his greatness and majesty, and sovereign dominion, which ought to be done in the most stately lofty strains of poetry. David, in the former psalm, gave God the glory of his covenant-mercy and love to his own people, in this, he gives him the glory of his works of creation and providence, his dominion over, and his bounty to, all the creatures. God is there praised as the God of grace, here as the God of nature. And this psalm is wholly bestowed on that subject; not as *Ps. xix.* which begins with it, but passes from it to the consideration of the divine law; nor as *Ps. viii.* which speaks of this but prophetically, and with an eye to Christ. This noble poem is thought, by very competent judges, greatly to excel, not only for piety and devotion, (that is past dispute,) but for flight of fancy, brightness of ideas, surprising turns, and all the beauties and ornaments of expression, any of the Greek or Latin poets upon any subject of this nature. Many great things the psalmist here gives God the glory of, I. The splendour of his majesty in the upper world, *v. 1.-4.* II. The creation of the sea, and the dry land, *v. 5.-9.* III. The provision he makes for the maintenance of all the creatures according to their nature, (*v. 10.-18.*) and again, *v. 27, 28.* IV. The regular course of the sun and moon, *v. 19.-24.* V. The furniture of the sea, *v. 25, 26.* VI. God's sovereign power over all the creatures, *v. 29.-32.* And, lastly, he concludes with a pleasant and firm resolution to continue praising God; (*v. 33.-35.*) with which we should heartily join, in singing this psalm.

1. **B**LESS the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty: 2. Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; 3. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind; 4. Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire; 5. *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever. 6. Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. 8. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. 9. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth.

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When we are addressing ourselves to any religious service, we must *stir up ourselves to take hold on God* in it; (*Isa. lxiv. 7.*) so David does here. "Come, my soul, where art thou? What art thou thinking of? Here is work to be done, good work, angels' work; set about it in good earnest, let all thy powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it; *Bless the Lord, O my soul.*"

In these verses,

I. The psalmist looks up to the divine glory shining in the upper world, of which, though it is one of the things not seen, faith is the evidence. With what reverence and holy awe does he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment, *O Lord my God, thou art very great!* It is the joy of the saints, that he who is their God is a great God; the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects. The majesty of God is here set forth by divers instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make, their equipage, compared with his, (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp,) is but as the light of a glow-worm, compared with that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great,

1. In their robes: and what are God's robes? *Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, v. 1.* God is seen in his works, and these bespeak him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. *Thou coverest thyself with light, as with a garment, v. 2.* God is light, (*1 John i. 5.*) the *Father of lights*; (*Jam. i. 17.*) he *dwells in light*, (*1 Tim. vi. 16.*) he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created the first day, *Gen. i. 3.* Of all visible beings, light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, that is, to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

2. In their palaces, or pavilions, when they take the field: and what is God's palace, and his pavilion? He *stretches out the heavens like a curtain*; (*v. 2.*) so he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded or *stretched out*, *Gen. i. 7.* He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments: so he does still; he now *stretches out the heavens like a curtain*, keeps them upon the stretch, and they *continue to this day according to his ordinance*. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world, to break its dazzling light; for though God *covers himself with light*, yet, in compassion to us, he *makes darkness his pavilion*; *thick clouds are a covering to him*. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, he is, that *fills heaven and earth*. He has his *chambers*, his *upper rooms*, so the word signifies, the *beams* whereof he *lays in the waters*, the waters that are above the firmament, (*v. 3.*) as he has *founded the earth upon the seas and floods*, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm in the place assigned them, as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he, whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

3. In their coaches of state, and their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries: but God *makes the clouds his chariots*, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud, as in a chariot, to mount Sinai, to give the law, and to mount Tabor,

to proclaim the gospel, (Matth. xvii. 5.) and he *walks* (a gentle pace indeed, yet stately) *upon the wings of the wind*. See xviii. 10, 11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleases, and serves his own purposes by them.

4. In their retinue or train of attendants: and here also God is very great; for (v. 4.) he *maketh his angels spirits*. This is quoted by the apostle, (Heb. i. 7.) to prove the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be *his angels* and *his ministers*, for they are under his dominion, and at his disposal; they are winds, and *a flame of fire*, that is, they appeared in wind and fire, so some; or, they are as swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he *maketh them spirits*, so the apostle quotes it. They are spiritual beings; and, whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies, as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the further removed from the incumbrances of the human nature, and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine nature. And they are bright and quick, and ascending as fire, as *a flame of fire*. In Ezekiel's vision, they ran and returned *like a flash of lightning*, Ezek. i. 14. Thence they are called *Seraphim*, *burners*. Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleases of them.

11. He looks down, and looks about, to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court, as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

1. He has founded the earth; (v. 5.) though he has *hung it upon nothing*, (Job xxvi. 2.) *ponderibus librata suis—balanced by its own weight*; yet it is as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He has built the earth upon her basis, so that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet *it shall not be removed for ever*, that is, not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting. "God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that, being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling into heaven."

2. He has set bounds to the sea; for that also is his.

(1.) He brought it within bounds in the creation. At first, the earth, which, being the more ponderous body, would subside of course, was *covered with the deep*, (v. 6.) *the waters were above the mountains*; and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, a habitation for man; and therefore, on the third day, God said, *Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear*, Gen. i. 9. This command of God is here called his *rebuke*, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water, and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with this word, and therefore it is also called here *the voice of his thunder*, which is a mighty voice and produces strange effects, v. 7. *At thy rebuke* as if they were made sensible that they were out of their place, *they fled, they hasted away*; (they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them;) as it is said, on another occasion, (lxxvii. 16.) *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, they were afraid*. Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror. But *was the Lord displeased against the rivers?* No, it was *for the salvation of his people*, Hab. iii. 8, 13. So here God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to

prepare room for him; for *men must not be made as the fishes of the sea*, (Hab. i. 14.) they must have air to breathe in. Immediately, therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, v. 8. *They go over hill and dale*, (as we say,) *go up by the mountains, and down by the valleys*; they will neither stop at the former, nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way to the *place which thou hast founded for them*, and there they make their bed. Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God: for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to, and resting in, the place assigned them, teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appoints us the bounds of our habitation.

(2.) He keeps it within bounds, (v. 9.) The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them; they may not, and therefore they do not, *turn again to cover the earth*. Once they did, in Noah's flood, because God bade them, but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not to drown the world again. God himself glories in this instance of his power, (Job xxxviii. 8, &c.) and uses it as an argument with us to fear him, Jer. v. 22. This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, That the waters of the sea would soon cover the earth, if God did not restrain them.

10. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* run among the hills. 11. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches. 13. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15. And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make his face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart. 16. The trees of the LORD are full of *sap*: the cedars of Lebanon, *which* he hath planted; 17. Where the birds make their nests: *as for* the stork, the fir-trees *are* her house. 18. The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats, *and* the rocks for the conies.

Having given glory to God, as the powerful Protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful Benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

1. He provides fresh water for their drink; *He sends the springs into the valleys*, v. 10. There is water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we ever so thirsty, it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink. Naturalists dispute about the origin of fountains; but, whatever are their second causes, here is their first Cause; it is God that *sends the springs into the brooks, which* walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive increase from the rain-water that descends from them. These *give drink*, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to *every beast of the field*; (v. 11.) for where God has given life, he provides a livelihood, and takes care

of all the creatures; even *the wild asses*, though untameable, and therefore of no use to man, are welcome to *quench their thirst*; and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though *born like the wild ass's colt*. We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair water with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable. That ought to be reckoned a great mercy, the want of which would be a great affliction: and the more common it is, the greater mercy it is; *Usus communis aquarium—Water is for common use*.

II. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast; *the heavens drop fatness; they hear the earth*, but God *hears them*, Hos. ii. 21. *He waters the hills from his chambers*, (v. 13.) from those chambers spoken of, (v. 3.) *the beams of which he lays in the waters*, those store-chambers, the clouds that distil the fruitful showers. The hills that are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called *the river of God*, (Isa. lxv. 9.) as Canaan was, Deut. xi. 11, 12. Thus *the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works*; either with the rain it drinks in, (the earth knows when it has enough, it is pity that any man should not,) or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation. The food which God brings forth out of the earth, (v. 14.) is *the fruit of his works*, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe how various and how valuable its products are; for the cattle there is grass, and the beasts of prey, that live not on grass, feed on those that do. For man there is herb, a better sort of grass, (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised,) nay, he is furnished with *wine, and oil, and bread*, v. 15.

We may observe here, concerning our food, that which will help to make us both humble and thankful. 1. To make us humble, let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God for all the supports of this life; we live upon alms, we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us: that our food comes all out of the earth, to remind us whence we ourselves were taken, and whither we must return; and that, therefore, we must not think to *live by bread alone*, for that will feed the body only, but must look into the word of God for the meat that endures to eternal life; and, further, that we are in this respect fellow-commoners with the beasts: the same earth, the same spot of ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings corn for man. 2. To make us thankful, let us consider, (1.) That God not only provides for us, but for our servants: the cattle that are of use to man are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when *the young lions*, that are not for the service of man, often *lack, and suffer hunger*. (2.) That our food is nigh us, and ready to us: having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on the *merchant-ships that bring food from afar*, Prov. xxxi. 14. (3.) That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight; so good a Master do we serve. [1.] Does nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is *bread, which strengthens man's heart*, and is therefore called *the staff of life*; let none who have that complain of want. [2.] Does nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is *wine, that makes glad the heart*, refreshes the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully. It is pity that that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their

duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. [3.] Is nature yet more humoursome, and does it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth; *oil to make the face to shine*, that the countenance may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

Nay, the Divine Providence not only furnishes animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs; (v. 16.) *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*; not only men's trees, which they take care of, and have an eye to, in their orchards, and parks, and other enclosures, but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence, they are *full of sap*, and want no nourishment; even the *cedars of Lebanon*, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth; they are trees *which he has planted*, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard; these are *full of sap*; for what God plants he will water; and they that are *planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God*, xcii. 13.

III. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves, and for the cattle that are serviceable to them; but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for.

1. The birds. Some birds, by instinct, make their nests in the bushes near rivers; (v. 12.) *By the springs that run among the hills*, some of the *fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches*. They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and Benefactor; and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly Father feeds them, (Matth. vi. 26.) and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow. The birds being made to *fly above the earth*, (as we find, Gen. i. 20.) they make their nests on high, in the tops of trees; (v. 17.) it should seem as if nature had an eye to this in *planting the cedars of Lebanon*, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heavenward shall not want resting-places. The stork is particularly mentioned; *the fir-trees*, which are very high, are *her house*, her castle.

2. The lesser sort of beasts; (v. 18.) *The wild goats*, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to *the high hills*, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find a shelter in the rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at defiance. Does God provide thus for the inferior creatures, and will he not himself be a Refuge and Dwelling-Place to his own people?

19. He appointeth the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening. 24. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches; 25. So is this great and wide sea,

wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26. There go the ships; *there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.* 27. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28. *That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good.* 29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God,

I. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions to show that the gods they worshipped are the creatures and servants of the true God; (v. 19.) *He appointed the moon for seasons, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides.* The full and change, the increase and decrease, of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so does the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down as if he were an intellectual being, and knew what he did.

God herein consults the comfort of man.

1. The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; (v. 20.) *Thou makest darkness, and it is night,* which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night *all the beasts of the forest creep forth* to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the *fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth,* (Gen. ix. 2.) which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour. See how nearly allied they are to the disposition of the wild beast, who *wait for the twilight,* (Job xxiv. 15.) and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul; when, either of those ways, *it is night,* then *all the beasts of the forest creep forth*, Satan's temptations then assault us, and have advantage against us. Then the *young lions roar after their prey*; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts, so that they have not strength or spirit to outrun them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to *seek their meat from God*, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God. The *roaring of the young lions*, like the *crying of the young ravens*, is interpreted, *asking their meat of God.* Does God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be *weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered?*

2. The light of the morning befriends the business of the day; (v. 22, 23.) *The sun arises,* (for, as he *knows his going down*, so, thanks be to God, he *knows his rising again,*) and then the wild beasts *shake themselves to their rest*, even they have some society among them, for they *gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens*, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that

while they are abroad, as become honest travellers, between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no opportunity to excuse himself from the business of the day, with this, *That there is a lion in the way.* Therefore, then *man goes forth to his work and to his labour*; the beasts of prey creep forth with fear, man goes forth with boldness, as one that has dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief, man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning, for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by; and which we must stick to till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which *no man can work.*

II. For the replenishing of the ocean; (v. 25, 26.) *As the earth is full of God's riches*, well-stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food; *so is this great and wide sea*, which seems a useless part of the globe, at least, not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place, and made it serviceable to man, both for navigation, (there go the ships, in which goods are conveyed to countries vastly distant, speedily, and much cheaper than by land-carriage,) and also to be his storehouse for fish; God made not the sea in vain, any more than the earth, he *made it to be inherited*, for *there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals*, which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation, (Gen. i. 21.) and is here called the *Leviathan*, as Job xli. 1. He is made to *play in the sea*; he has nothing to do, as man has, who *goes forth to his work*; he has nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters. It is pity that any of the children of men, who have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world, like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein; spending all their time in pastime. The Leviathan is said to *play in the waters*, because he is so well armed against all assaults, that he sets them at defiance, and *laughs at the shaking of a spear*, Job xli. 29.

III. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, v. 27, 28. 1. God is a bountiful Benefactor to them; he *gives them their meat*; he *opens his hand, and they are filled with good.* He supports the armies both of heaven and earth; even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good Housekeeper that provides for so large a family. 2. They are patient expectants from him. They all wait upon him; they seek their food, according to the natural instinct God has put into them, and in the proper season for it; and affect not any other food, or at any other time, than nature has ordained, they do their part for the obtaining of it; what God gives them they gather, and expect not that Providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with; they are filled with good; they desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings and discontent, and dissatisfaction with our lot.

IV. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which every species of each is still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, 1. All the creatures perishing; (v. 29.) *Thou hidest thy face, withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled immediately.* Every creature has as necessary a dependance upon God's favours as every saint is

sensible *he* has, and therefore says with David, (Ps. xxx. 7.) *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man is the cause of all the vanity and burthen which the whole creation groans under. *Thou takest away their breath,* which is in thy hand, and then, and not till then, *they die and return to their dust,* to their first principles. The spirit of the beast, which goes downward, is at God's command, as well as the spirit of a man, which goes upward. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. 2. All preserved notwithstanding, in a succession; (v. 30.) *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;* the same spirit, the same divine will and power, by which they were all created at first, still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passes away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus the *face of the earth is renewed* from day to day by the light of the sun, which beautifies it anew every morning; from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring, and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This (the Jews say) is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God; (v. 24.) *O Lord, how manifold are thy works!* They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet *in wisdom hast thou made them all.* When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected, and not done with due care; but God's works, though many, and of very different kinds, are all made in wisdom, and with the greatest exactness; there is not the least flaw or defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal Monarch.

31. The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

1. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

(1.) He is to be praised, [1.] As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection; *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever,* v. 31. It shall endure to the end of time, in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity, in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's

glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variable-ness. [2.] As a gracious God; *The Lord shall rejoice in his works.* He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness which he had when he *saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good,* and rested the seventh day. We often do that which, upon the review, we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always *rejoices in his works,* because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never does; he rejoices in the works of his grace, his *gifts and callings are without repentance.* [3.] As a God of almighty power; (v. 32.) *He looks on the earth, and it trembles,* as unable to bear his frowns; trembles, as Sinai did, *at the presence of the Lord. He touches the hills, and they smoke.* The volcanoes, or burning mountains, such as Ætna, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumiliated sinners. If an angry look and a touch have such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his outstretched arm? *Who knows the power of his anger?* Who then dares set it at defiance? God therefore rejoices in his works, because they are all so observant of him; and he will in like manner *take pleasure in them that fear him, and that tremble at his word.*

(2.) The psalmist will himself be much in praising him; (v. 33.) *"I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God, will praise him as Jehovah, the Creator, and as my God, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but as long as I live, and while I have my being."* Because we have our life and being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live and have our being, we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being on earth, we hope to have a better life and better being in a better world, and there to be doing this work in a better manner, and in better company.

2. Joy to himself; (v. 34.) *My meditation of him shall be sweet;* it shall be fixed and close, it shall be affecting and influencing, and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified. *"I will be glad in the Lord,* it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will *rejoice in the Lord always, and in him only."* All my joys shall centre in him, and in him they shall be full.

3. Terror to the wicked; (v. 35.) *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.* (1.) They that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed: none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. (2.) They that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him, whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. They that make that earth to groan under the burthen of their impieties, which God thus fills with his riches, deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out. (3.) They that heartily desire to praise God themselves, cannot but have a holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and a holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction, and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. Even this ought to be the matter of their praise; *"While sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord* that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. *When the wicked are no more, I hope to be praising*

God world without end: and therefore *Praise ye the Lord*; let all about me join with me in praising God. *Hallelujah*; sing praise to Jehovah. This is the first time that we meet with *Hallelujah*; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it is upon the like occasion; when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burthen of the song, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.

PSALM CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us, that, in our devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work than how the time passes; and neither overstretch ourselves, by coveting to be long, nor over stint ourselves, by coveting to be short, but either the one or the other, as we find in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm; the general scope is the same with most of the psalms, to set forth the glory of God, but the subject matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace, we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the Word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts—so copious, so various, so inexhaustible, is the subject. In the foregoing psalm, we are taught to praise God for his wondrous work of common providence with reference to the world in general; in this, we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the eleven first verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph to be used (as it should seem) in the daily service of the sanctuary, when the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it; by which it appears both who penned it, and when, and upon what occasion, it was penned, 1 *Chron.* xvi. 7, &c. David by it designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface, (v. 1..7) and the history itself in several articles. I. God's covenant with the patriarchs, v. 8..11. II. His care of them while they were strangers, v. 12..15. III. His raising up Joseph to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, v. 16..22. IV. The increase of Israel in Egypt, and their deliverance out of Egypt, v. 23..38. V. The care he took of them in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, v. 39..45. In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; must look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the Old Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for ensamples.

1. **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. 2. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 4. Seek the LORD, and his strength; seek his face evermore. 5. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7. He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God.

Observe, I. The duties we are here called to, and they are many; but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name. (1.) We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful Benefactor, and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours; poor returns for rich receivings. (2.) Call upon his name; as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies is accepted

as an acknowledgment of former mercies; *Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him.* (3.) Make known his deeds, (v. 1.) that others may join with you in praising him. Talk ye of all his wondrous works, (v. 2.) as we talk of things that we are full of and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them *as we sit in the house, and as we go by the way*; (Deut. vi. 7.) not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion, and the encouraging of our own and others' faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. (4.) Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others, and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. (5.) Glory in his holy name; let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God, and their relation to him, Jer. ix. 23, 24. *Praise ye his holy name*, so some; but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him we give glory to him. (6.) Seek him; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he has appointed. Seek the LORD and his strength, that is, the ark of his strength; seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit, to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be inquired of. Seek the LORD, and be strengthened; so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be strengthened in the inward man, must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. Seek his strength, and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. "Seek his face evermore; seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it." (7.) Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him, (v. 3.) for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure that their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found the Rewarder of those that diligently seek him. If those have reason to rejoice that seek the LORD, much more those that have found him.

2. Some arguments to quicken us to these duties.

(1.) Consider both what he has said, and what he has done, to engage us for ever to him; you will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders which should make deep and durable impressions upon you; the wonders of his providence which he has wrought for you, and those who are gone before you, the marvellous works that he has done, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful and with the grateful; the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and intrusted you with; the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand, v. 5.

(2.) Consider the relation you stand in to him; (v. 6.) Ye are the seed of Abraham his servant; you are born in his house, and being the reborn entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your Master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. You are the children of Jacob his chosen,

and are *chosen* and *beloved* for the fathers' sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you inherit. You are the children of godly parents, do not degenerate; you are God's church upon earth, and if you do not praise him, who should?

(3.) Consider your interest in him; *He is the Lord our God*, v. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God, (Isa. viii. 19.) and praise their God? Dan. v. 4. He is *Jehovah, our God*; he that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, has an irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty. *His judgments are in all the earth*; he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even to those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations: 9. Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel for an everlasting covenant; 11. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12. When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13. When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people, 14. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; 15. *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 16. Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17. He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant; 18. Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron; 19. Until the time that his word came; the word of the LORD tried him. 20. The king sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; 22. To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom. 23. Israel also came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24. And he increased his people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught, in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of, and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the psalmist here does from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church; and our histories greatly outshine theirs.

Two things are here made the subject of praise; I. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise, that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers.

In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel, *he remembered his covenant*, (v. 8.) and he will remember it *for ever*; it is the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations. See here the power of the promise; it is the word which he commanded, and which will take effect: see the perpetuity of the promise; it is commanded to a *thousand generations*, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty; (1 Chron. xvi. 15.) *Be ye mindful always of his covenant*. God will not forget it, and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a *covenant*, because there was something required on man's part as the condition of the promise. Observe, 1. The persons with whom this covenant was made—with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, Heb. xi. 8, 9. 2. The ratifications of the covenant; it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac and to Abraham. See to whom God *swore by himself*, Heb. vi. 13, 14. Is that sure which is passed into a *law*? He *confirmed the same for a law*, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed *for an everlasting covenant*, inviolable. 3. The covenant itself; *Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan*, v. 11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence, but by promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it them himself, as it were with his own hand; it shall be given them as their lot, which God assigns them, and measures out to them; as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title, by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase; by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the *inheritance* we have obtained, Eph. i. 11. And *this is the promise which God has promised us*, (as Canaan was the promise he promised them,) *even eternal life*, 1 John ii. 25. Tit. i. 2.

II. His providences concerning the patriarchs, while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise; which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things *happened unto them for examples*, and encouragements to all the heirs of promises that live by faith as they did.

1. They were *wonderfully protected and sheltered*, and (as the Jewish masters express it) *gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty*. This is accounted for, v. 12-15. Where we may observe,

(1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men. To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable, that, if he had not *prepared for them a city* in the other world, he would have been *ashamed to have been called their God*, (see Heb. xi. 16.) because he was always generous; and yet, even in this world, he was not wanting to them, but, that he might appear to do uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials. [1.] They were few, very few: Abraham was called alone; (Isa. li. 2.) he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to run his country; Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, Gen. xxxiv. 30.) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few; and yet upheld. [2.] They were strangers, and therefore were the more likely to be abused and to meet with strange usage, and

the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers, (1 Pet. iv. 4.) and to be hooted at as *speckled birds*, Jer. xii. 9. Though the whole land was theirs by promise, yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant, that they *confessed themselves strangers in it*, Heb. xi. 13. [3.] They were unsettled; (v. 13.) *They went from one nation to another*, from one part of that land to another, (for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations, Gen. xii. 8.—xiii. 3, 18.) nay, *from one kingdom to another people*, from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them; yet they were forced to it by famine. Note, Though frequent removals are neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for them, and they may be the lot of some of the best men.

(2.) How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which were the more magnified by their being so many ways exposed, v. 14, 15. They were not able to help themselves, and yet, [1.] No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them, and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to Gen. xxxv. 5. where we find that *the terror of God* (an unaccountable restraint) *was upon the cities that were round about them*, so that, though provoked, *they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob*. [2.] Even crowned heads, that did offer to wrong them, were not only checked and chidden for it, but controlled and baffled; *He reproved kings for their sakes*, in dreams and visions, saying, "*Touch not mine anointed*, it is at your peril if you do, nay, it shall not be in your power to do it; *do my prophets no harm*." Pharaoh king of Egypt was plagued, (Gen. xii. 17.) and Abimelech king of Gerar was sharply rebuked, (Gen. xx. 6.) for doing wrong to Abraham. Note, *First*, Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes, if they do wrong. *Secondly*, God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that *oil of gladness*, 1 John ii. 27. *Thirdly*, They that offer to touch God's prophets, with design to harm them, may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is zealous for his prophets; whoso *touches them, touches the apple of his eye*. *Fourthly*, Even they that *touch the prophets*, nay, that *kill the prophets*, (as many did,) cannot *do them any harm*, any real harm. *Lastly*, God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied. And here also, (1.) They were reduced to great extremity; even in Canaan, the land of promise, *he called for a famine*, v. 16. Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction, when God sends them forth with commission. To try the faith of the patriarchs, God *broke the whole staff of bread*, even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was. (2.) God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependence upon his promise, that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil thing to befall them, or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and intrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, and to save that holy seed alive, Gen. xlix. 24.—1. 20. In order to this,

[1.] He was humbled, greatly humbled; (v. 17,

18.) *God sent a man before them, even Joseph*; many years before the famine began, he was sent before them, to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of Providence, and so long its reaches. But in what character did he go to Egypt, who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but *he was sold thither for a servant*, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough, and, one would think, set him far enough from any probability of being great; and yet he was brought lower, he was made a prisoner, (v. 18.) *His feet they hurt with fetters*, being unjustly charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress; *the iron entered into his soul*, was very painful to him; and the false accusation, which was the cause of his imprisonment, did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment.

[2.] He was exalted, highly exalted; he continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, until the time appointed of God for his release, (v. 19.) when *his word came*, his interpretations of dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears by the chief butler; and then *the word of the Lord cleared him*; the power God gave him to foretell things to come, rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with; for it could not be thought that God would give such a power to so bad a man as he was represented to be. *God's word tried him*, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time set when God's word will come for the comfort of all that trust in it, Hab. ii. 3. *At the end, it shall speak, and not lie*. God gave the word, and then *the king sent and loosed him*; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh, finding him to be a favourite of heaven, *First*, Discharged him from his imprisonment; (v. 20.) *he let him go free*. God has often, by wonderful turns of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocency. *Secondly*, He advanced him to the highest posts of honour, v. 21, 22. He made him lord high chamberlain of his household; (*he made him lord of his house*;) nay, he put him into the office of lord treasurer, *the ruler of all his substance*. He made him prime minister of state, lord president of his council, to *command his princes at his pleasure*, and *teach them wisdom*; general of his forces; *According to thy word shall all my people be ruled*, Gen. xli. 40, 43, 44. He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators, and punish those that were disobedient. In all this, Joseph was designed to be,

1. A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great, that he might *do good, especially in the household of faith*. 2. A figure of Christ that was to come; who, because he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and has all judgment committed to him.

Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, *Israel also came into Egypt*, (v. 23.) where he and all his were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years. Thus the New Testament church has a place provided for her, even in the wilderness, where *she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time*; (Rev. xii. 14.) verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, v. 24. In Egypt *he increased his people greatly*; they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became *stronger than their enemies*, and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it, (Exod. i. 9.)

The children of Israel are more and mightier than we; when God pleases, a little one shall become a thousand; and God's promises, though they work slowly, work surely.

25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26. He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. 27. They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. 29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30. The land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. 32. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. 33. He smote their vines also, and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. 34. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number. 35. And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37. He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and *there was* not one feeble person among their tribes. 38. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them. 39. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night. 40. *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river. 42. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. 43. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness; 44. And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; 45. That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

After the history of the patriarchs, follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

I. Their affliction in Egypt; (v. 25.) *He turned the heart* of the Egyptians, who had protected them, *to hate* them, and *deal subtilly* with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them; and though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of, Gen. xliii. 32.—xlv. 34.) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them, because they despised them, now because they feared them. *They dealt subtilly* with them, set all their politics on work, to find out ways and means to weaken them, and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burthens heavy, and their lives bitter, and slew their male children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtilty, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them; for every creature is that

to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy. Though God is not the Author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

II. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the ten commandments. Observe,

1. The instruments employed in that deliverance; (v. 26.) *He sent Moses his servant* on this errand, and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be their lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more, and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

2. The means of accomplishing that deliverance; these were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders, in summoning them just as God appointed them, and *they rebelled not against his word*, (v. 28.) as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians, but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are intrusted to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed into a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's *signs, and his wonders*; (v. 27.) they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. *They showed the words of his signs*, so it is in the original; for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not, as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and they spake aloud. They are all, or most, of them here specified, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.

(1.) The plagues of *darkness*, v. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first. God *sent darkness*, and, coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command *made it dark*. And then they, that is, the people of Israel, *rebelled not against God's word*, a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised; in doing which, the three days' darkness would be a protection to them. The Old Translation follows the Septuagint, and reads it, *They were not obedient to his word*; which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, *would not let the people go*; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.

(2.) The turning of the river Nilus (which they idolized) *into blood*, and all their other waters, which *slew their fish*; (v. 29.) and so they were deprived, not only of their drink, but the daintiest of their meat, Numb. xi. 5.

(3.) The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the *chambers of their kings* and great men, whose hearts had been full of vermin, more nauseous, and more noxious—contempt of, and enmity to, both God and his Israel.

(4.) Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes, v. 31. Exod. viii. 17, 24. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most despicable, animals, for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence.

(5.) Hail-stones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber trees in *their coasts*, and killed their

vines, and their other fruit trees, *v. 32, 33.* Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, to that degree, that the *fire ran along upon the ground*, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, *Exod. ix. 23.*

(6.) *Locusts and caterpillars* destroyed all the *herbs* which were made for the service of man, and ate the bread out of their mouths, *v. 34, 35.* See what variety of judgments God has, wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but, when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies; and, how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, *Joel i. 4, 6.*

(7.) Having mentioned all the plagues, but those of the murrain and boils, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of the *first-born*, *v. 36.* In the dead of the night, the joys and hopes of their families, the *chief of their strength*, and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God seized theirs by way of reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for *when God judges, he will overcome*, and they will certainly sit down losers at last, that contend with him.

3. The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, (1.) They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. God not only brought them forth, but he *brought them forth with silver and gold*, *v. 37.* God empowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours, (which were indeed but part of payment for the service they had done them,) and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his, and therefore he *might*, their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he *could*, give it to the Israelites. (2.) Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage; and yet, when God brought them forth, *there was not one feeble person*, none sick, none so much as sickly, among their tribes. They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, that among so many thousands there was not one sick! So false was the representation which the enemies of the Jews, in after ages, gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and that therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. (3.) They had been trampled upon, and insulted over; and yet they were brought out with honour; (*v. 38.*) *Egypt was glad when they departed*; for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that *the fear of Israel fell upon them*, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome. God can and will make his church a *burthensome stone* to all that *heave at it*, and seek to displace it, so that they shall think themselves happy, that get out of its way; (*Zech. xii. 3.*) *when God judges, he will overcome.* (4.) They had spent their days in sorrow and in sighing, by reason of their bondage; but now he brought them forth *with joy and gladness*, *v. 43.* When Egypt's cry for grief was loud, their first-born being all slain, Israel's shouts for joy were as loud: both when they looked back upon the land of slavery out of which they were rescued, and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening. God now put a new song into their mouth.

4. The special care God took of them in the wilderness. (1.) For their shelter; beside the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy; he *spread a cloud for a covering*, (*v. 39.*) which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion, (*xviii. 11.*) and now it was Israel's; for they also were his hidden ones. (2.) For their guidance and refreshment in the dark, he appointed a pillar of *fire to give light in the night*, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnishes them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come there where it will be all day to eternity. (3.) He fed them both with necessities and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl; (*v. 40.*) *The people asked, and he brought quails*; and when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied *with the bread of heaven*; those are curious and covetous indeed, who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat eagles' food, and that constantly, and on free cost. And as every bit they ate, had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank; *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out*, *v. 41.* Common providence fetches waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the Divine Power brings bread from the clouds, and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out at once, but it ran *like a river*, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the *rock follow them*; (*1 Cor. x. 4.*) and which increased the miracle, *this river of God* (so it might be truly called) *ran in dry places*, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would expect it should have been, by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, *I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen*, *Isa. xliii. 19, 20.*

5. Their entrance, at length, into Canaan; (*v. 44.*) *He gave them the lands of the heathen*; put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for, God's Israel had the enjoyment of; *they inherited the labour of the people*, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

6. The reasons why God did all this for them.

(1.) Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, *v. 42.* They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did these great things in their favour, *because he remembered the word of his holiness* (his covenant) *with Abraham his servant*, and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground. See *Deut. vii. 8.*

(2.) Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but *that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws*; that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution; that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that, God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law, concluding that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are *therefore* made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah,

with which the psalm concludes, may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours, and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet does he expect so little from us? *Praise ye the Lord.*

PSALM CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness, but our own badness, which serve as foils to each other: our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with Hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, v. 47. I rather think it was penned by David at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the two last in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it; (1 *Chron.* xvi. 34..36.) *Gather us from among the heathen*; for we may suppose that in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites, when David was forced to wander. In this psalm, we have, I. The preface to the narrative, speaking honour to God, (v. 1, 2.) comfort to the saints, (v. 3.) and the desire of the faithful toward God's favour, v. 4, 5. II. The narrative itself of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocations at the Red sea; (v. 6..12.) lust; (v. 13..15.) mutiny; (v. 16..18.) worshipping the golden calf; (v. 19..23.) murmuring; (v. 24..27.) joining themselves to Baal-peor; (v. 28..31.) quarrelling with Moses; (v. 32, 33.) incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, v. 34..39. To which is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, v. 40..46. III. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise, v. 47, 48. It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that, being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God, and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 2. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can show forth all his praise? 3. Blessed are they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth righteousness at all times. 4. Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto thy people*: O visit me with thy salvation; 5. That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

We are here taught,

1. To bless God; (v. 1, 2.) *Praise ye the Lord*, that is, (1.) Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. *He is good*, and his mercy *endures for ever*; let us therefore own our obligations to him, and make him a return of our best affections and services. (2.) Give him the glory of his greatness; his *mighty acts*, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed. *Who can utter these?* Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it? They are so many, that they cannot be numbered, so mysterious, that they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told, still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must *show forth his praise*; we may show forth some of it, but *who*

can show forth all? Not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

2. To bless the people of God, to call and count them happy; (v. 3.) *They that keep judgment are blessed*, for they are fit to be employed in praising God: God's people are they whose principles are sound; *they keep judgment*, they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable; they *do righteousness*, are just to God, and to all men; and herein they are steady and constant; they do it *at all times*, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

3. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it, accordingly, with all seriousness; as the psalmist here, v. 4, 5. (1.) He has an eye to the loving-kindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness; "*Remember me, O Lord*, to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, *with the favour which thou bearest to thy people*." As there are a people in the world who are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy. (2.) He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness; *O visit me with thy salvation*. "Afford me (says Dr. Hammond) that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee." Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. (3.) He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good; (v. 5.) "*That I may see the good of thy chosen*, and be as happy as thy saints are; and happier I do not desire to be." God's people are here called his *chosen*, his *nation*, his *inheritance*; for he has set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them, and glorified in them. The chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness, and of their glorying; which is their pleasure, and their praise. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and they who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any man; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

6. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red Sea. 8. Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. 10. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11. And the waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left. 12. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable, now that the

church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that *therefore* he has done right, because *we have done wickedly*; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

I. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God; (v. 6.) "*We have sinned with our fathers*, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, to *augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord*," Numb. xxxii. 14. Matth. xxiii. 32. And see how they lay loads upon themselves, as becomes penitents; "*We have committed iniquity*, that which is in its own nature sinful; and *we have done wickedly*; we have sinned with a high hand, presumptuously." Or, this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins; *We have sinned with our fathers*, for we were in their loins, and we *bear their iniquity*, Lani. v. 7.

II. They bewail the sins of their fathers, when they were first formed into a people; which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even further than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take occasion, from the history of Israel's rebellions, to lament the pravity and perverseness of man's nature, and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1. The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them; (v. 7.) *They understood not thy wonders in Egypt*. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have understood*. They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least, *they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies* in them. *Therefore* God is distrusted, because his favours are not remembered.

2. Their perverseness, arising from this stupidity; *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea*. The provocation was, despair of deliverance, (because the danger was great,) and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, Exod. xiv. 11, 12. Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was *at the sea, at the Red sea*, when they were newly come out of Egypt, and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but that he brought them out of Egypt on purpose to *kill them in the wilderness*. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them, notwithstanding their provocations, v. 8-11. (1.) He forced a passage for them through the sea; *He rebuked the Red sea* for standing in their way and retarding their march, and it was *dried up* immediately; as in the creation, at *God's rebuke the wa-*

ters fled, civ. 7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he *led them* into the sea, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as *through the wilderness*; he encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See Isa. lxiii. 12-14.

(2.) He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them quickly; but God *saved them from the hand of him that hated them*, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account; *from the hand of his enemy*, which was just ready to seize them, *God redeemed them*, (v. 10.) interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. (3.) To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red sea, which was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians; (v. 11.) *The waters covered their enemies*, so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame; for, the next tide, they were thrown up dead upon the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. *There was not one of them left alive*, to bring tidings of what was become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them, as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us, (v. 8.) it was *for his name's sake*; though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, or make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, *that he might make his mighty power to be known*, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays, (Numb. xiv. 17, 19.) *Let the power of my Lord be great, and pardon the iniquity of this people*. The power of the God of grace, in pardoning sin and sparing sinners, is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present; (v. 12.) *Then believed they his words*, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had, in mercy to them, brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then *they feared the Lord, and his servant Moses*, Exod. xiv. 31. *Then they sang his praise*, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, Exod. xv. 1. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, *They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine*, Isa. xxix. 24.

13. They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel; 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. 16. They envied Moses also in the camp; and Aaron the saint of the Lord. 17. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked. 19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an

ox that eateth grass. 21. They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; 22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red Sea. 23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*. 24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land; they believed not his word; 25. But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD: 26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29. Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions; and the plague brake in upon them. 30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness, unto all generations for evermore. 32. They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians; (1 Cor. x. 5, &c.) for these things were *written for our admonition*, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

I. The cause of their sin, was, disregard to the works and word of God, v. 13. 1. They minded not what he had done for them; *They soon forgot his works*, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. They that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them; God took notice of this; (Exod. xxxii. 8.) *They have turned aside quickly. They made haste, they forgot his works*, so it is in the margin; which some make to be two several instances of their sin. *They made haste*, their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and, because they were not, they questioned whether they should ever be there, and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way: whereas *he that believeth doth not make haste*, Isa. xxviii. 16. And withal, *they forgot his works*, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the promises proved. This is mentioned again; (v. xxi. 22.) *They forgot God their saviour*; they forgot that he had been their saviour: those that forget the works of God, forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them *in Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea*, things which we at this distance cannot, or should not, be

unmindful of. They are called *great things*, (for though the great God does nothing mean, yet he does some things that are in a special manner great,) *wondrous works*, out of the common road of Providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and *terrible things*, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten; even miracles that were seen, passed away with them as tales that are told. 2. They minded not what God had said to them, nor would they depend upon it; *They waited not for his counsel*, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves about which they did not consult him, and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan directly, and had not patience to tarry God's time; the delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained, (v. 24.) *They believed not his word*, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and (v. 25.) *They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord*, who gave them counsel which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, Numb. xiv. 6, 7, &c. Those that will not wait for God's counsel, shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

II. Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it them; (v. 14.) *They lusted a lust*, (so the word is,) *in the wilderness*; they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have *flesh* to eat. They were now supported entirely by miracles, so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator: they were also, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had no patience to stay for dainties till they came thither; they had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh, as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word: they did not only wish for flesh, *but they lusted exceedingly* after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called *lusting after evil things*, (1 Cor. x. 6.) though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, Ps. cv. 40. Yet this was not all; *They tempted God in the desert*, where they had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See lxxviii. 19, 20.

Now, how did God show his displeasure against them for this? We are told how; (v. 15.) *He gave them their request*, but gave it them in anger; and with a curse, for he *sent leanness into their soul*; he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, *while the flesh was yet between their teeth*, as we read, Numb. xi. 33. It was the consumption of the life. Note, (1.) What is asked in passion, is often given in wrath. (2.) Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, have at the same time leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves, that feast their bodies, and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then *the soul delights itself in fatness*, Isa. lv. 2

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them, both in church and state; (v. 16.) *They envied Moses his authority in the camp*, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, and chief-justice in all their courts; they envied *Aaron his power*, as *saint of the Lord*, consecrated to the office of High-Priest; and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so-much-admired right of primogeniture. Note, *They are preparing ruin for themselves*, who envy those whom God has put honour upon, and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon them who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord.

How did God show his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble; (v. 17, 18.) we have the story, Numb. xvi. 52, 35. (1.) They that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by *the earth, which opened and swallowed them up*, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they were never submit to God's government. (2.) They that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority, in things pertaining to God, suffered the vengeance of Heaven, *for fire came out from the Lord, and consumed them*; and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to divine justice. *The flame burnt up the wicked*; for though they vied with *Aaron, the saint of the Lord*, for holiness, (Numb. xvi. 3, 5.) yet God adjudged them wicked, and, as such, cut them off, as, in due time, he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made, and worshipped, the golden calf, and this in Horeb, there where the law was given, and God had expressly said, *Thou shalt neither make any graven image, nor bow down to it*; they did both; *They made a calf, and worshipped it*, v. 19. Herein they bid defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the little world; (1.) That of human reason; for *they changed their glory*, their God, at least, the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud, (either a dark cloud or a bright one,) without any manner of visible similitude, *into the similitude of Apis*, one of the Egyptian idols, *an ox that eateth grass*, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, v. 20. Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible, both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have done so. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory, is explained by St. Paul, (Rom. i. 23.) to be the *changing of the glory of the incorruptible God*. (2.) That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spake to them, but in the works he wrought for them, *wondrous works*, which spake aloud that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God, and is alone to be worshipped, v. 21, 22.

For this, God showed his displeasure by declaring the decree, that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he *shake of destroying them*, (v. 23.) and certainly he had done it, if *Moses his chosen had not stood before him in the breach*, (v. 23.) if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate, about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to, and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ,

God's *Chosen*, his *Elect*, in whom his soul delights; who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God; (v. 24.) *They despised the pleasant land*; Canaan was a pleasant land, Deut. viii. 7. They undervalued it, when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the guidance of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain, and returning to Egypt again. *They believed not God's word concerning it*, but *murmured in their tents*, basely charging God with a design upon them, in bringing them thither, that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, Numb. xiv. 2, 3. And when they were reminded of God's power and promise, they were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord, that they attempted to stone those who spake to them, Numb. xiv. 10. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land; a promise is left us of entering into it, but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God, that *he lifted up his hand against them*, in a way of threatening, *to destroy them in the wilderness*, nay, in a way of swearing, for he sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; (xcv. 11. Numb. xiv. 28.) nay, and he threatened that their children also should be *overthrown and scattered*, (v. 26, 27.) and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan; (v. 28.) *They joined themselves to Baal-peor*, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporal and in spiritual whoredom, Numb. xxv. 1-3. They that did often partake of the altar of the living God, now ate the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab, that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified; or sacrifices to the infernal deities, on the behalf of their dead friends. *Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions*, (v. 29.) in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands, and his threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great, that, long after, it is said, *They were not cleansed from it*, Josh. xxii. 17.

God testified his displeasure at this, (1.) By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away 24,000 of those impudent sinners. (2.) By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate, for the suppressing of the sin, and checking the contagion of it. He stood up, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God, that upon it *the plague was stayed*, v. 30. By this, and some other like acts of public justice on that occasion, (Numb. xxv. 4, 5.) the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall; when the proper officers did their duty, God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But Phinehas herein signaling himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was counted to him for righteousness to all generations, (v. 31.) and, in recompense of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. *He*

shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices, who had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, v. 30.) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year *they angered God at the waters of strife*, (v. 32.) which refers to that story, Numb. xx. 3-5. And that which aggravated it now, was, that it *went ill with Moses for their sakes*; for though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking, that they put him into a passion, and, being now grown very old, and off his guard, *he spake unadvisedly with his lips*, (v. 33.) and not as became him on that occasion; for he said in a heat, *Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?* ¶ This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation, to keep our mouth as with a bridle, (xxxix. 1-3.) and to *take heed to our spirits*, that they admit not resentments too much; for, when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to *speak unadvisedly*. But it is charged upon the people as their sin; *They provoked his spirit* with that with which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which, by them, we give to the passions of others, especially of those, who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet.

God shows his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan, for their misconduct upon this occasion; by which, (1.) God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does their sin deserve, who had spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (2.) God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government, at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits.

34. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: 35. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36. And they served their idols; which were a snare unto them. 37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 38. And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons, and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, inasmuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43. Many

times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise. 48. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

Here,

I. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's conduct in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

1. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan, made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those which fetched them out of Egypt; for by the time they were just settled in Canaan, they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostasy.

(1.) They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction; (v. 34.) when they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

(2.) When they spared them, they promised themselves, that, notwithstanding this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down-hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to *destroy the heathen*, the next news we hear is, They were *mingled among the heathen*, made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they *learned their works*, v. 35. That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

(3.) When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but, by degrees, they learned that too; (v. 36.) *They served their idols*, in the same manner, and with the same rites, that they served them; and they became a *snare to them*; that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

(4.) When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last; (v. 37, 38.) in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and reigned himself in blood and slaughter; *They sacrificed their sons and daughters*, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror: They *shed innocent blood*, the most innocent, for it was infant blood, nay, it was the *blood of their sons and their daughters*. See the power of the spirit that works

in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villany which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly *gives them up to a reprobate mind*, Rom. i. 28.

Their sin was, in part, their own punishment; for by it, [1.] They wronged their country; *The land was polluted with blood*, v. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it, which were designed to be its honour. [2.] They wronged their consciences; (v. 39.) *They went a whoring with their own inventions*, and so debauched their own minds, and were *defiled with their own works*, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected; For his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God.

(1.) He fell out with them for it, (v. 40.) he was angry with them; *The wrath of God*, that consuming fire, *was kindled against his people*; for from them he took it worse than from the heathen that never knew him; nay, he was sick of them, he abhorred his own inheritance, which once he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any are to God in profession, the more loathsome are they, if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at our door.

(2.) Their enemies then fell upon them, and, their Defence being departed, made an easy prey of them; (v. 41, 42.) *He gave them into the hands of the heathen*. Observe here how the punishment answered to the sin, *They mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works*; from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, who is a tempter, will be a tormentor. The heathen hated them; apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when they that *hated them ruled over them*, and they were brought in subjection under them, no marvel that they oppressed them, and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between *his service and the service of the kings of the countries*, 2 Chron. xii. 8.

(3.) When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, v. 43. This refers to the days of the Judges, when God often raised up deliverers, and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry, and *provoked God with their counsels*, their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they were brought very low for their iniquity. Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, are justly debased, and humbled, and brought low, by the judgments of God.

(4.) At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, v. 44-46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, *cast down, but not cast off*; God appeared for them, [1.] As a God of mercy, who looked upon their grievances, *regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them*; so some; who looked over their complaints, for he *heard their cry* with tender compassion, (Exod. iii. 7.) and overlooked their provocations; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he *repented according to the multitude of his mercies*, and reversed

the sentence; though he is not a *man that he should repent*, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God, who pities us, and changes his way. [2.] As a God of truth, who *remembered for them his covenant*, and made good every word that he had spoken; and therefore, bad as they were, he would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise. [3.] As the God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. *He made them to be pitied, even of those that carried them captives*, and had hated them and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs, and, *when a man's ways please the Lord*, will make even his enemies to pity him, and be at peace with him. When God pities, men shall. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—A God at peace with us makes every thing else at peace.*

II. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance; even then when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people, still there was occasion to pray, *Lord, turn again our captivity*; (cxvi. 1, 4.) so here, (v. 47.) *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen*. We may suppose, that many who were forced into foreign countries, in the times of the Judges, (as Naomi was, Ruth i. 1.) were not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, *Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name*; not only that they may have cause to give thanks, and hearts to give thanks, but that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished, and so may *triumph in thy praise*, over those that had, in scorn, challenged them to *sing the Lord's song in a strange land*.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it; (v. 48.) *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting*. He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and solet him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then *let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah*, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises, and confessions. According to this rubric or directory, we find, that, when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung, all the people said, *Amen*, and praised the Lord by saying, *Hallelujah*. By these two comprehensive words, it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises which, as their mouth, they offer up to God, according to his will, saying *Amen* to the prayers, and *Hallelujah* to the praises.

PSALM CVII.

The psalmist, having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there were those who pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those who worshipped images had some knowledge of a supreme *Nūmen*, to whom, when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care. 1. He specifies some of the most common calamities of human life, and shows how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their

prayers. 1. Banishment and dispersion, v. 2. 9. 2. Captivity and imprisonment, v. 10. 16. 3. Sickness and distemper of body, v. 17. 22. 4. Danger and distress at sea, v. 23. 32. These are put for all similar perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present Help. II. He specifies the varieties and vicissitudes of events concerning nations and families; in all which, God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, v. 33. 43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses, it will be comfortable to sing this psalm, with application; but if we be not, others are, and have been, of whose deliverance it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

1. **G**IVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he* is good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 2. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Here is,

I. A general call to all to give thanks to God, v. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray it over, set themselves herein to *give thanks to the Lord*; and those that have not any special matter for praise, may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness; in the fountain *he is good*, in the streams *his mercy endures for ever*, and never fails.

II. A particular demand hereof from the *redeemed of the Lord*; which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer, and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these are the *children of God that were scattered abroad*, whom Christ died to *gather together in one*, out of all lands, John xi. 52. Matth. xxiv. 31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress *they cried unto the Lord*, v. 6. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*. Does any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles arrive at an extreme, that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before, then cry aloud; and then it is God's time to succour; in the mount he will be seen.

1. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue; *He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy*, (v. 2.) not by *might or power*, it may be, (Zech. iv. 6.) nor by *price or reward*, (Isa. xlv. 13.) but by the spirit of God working on the spirits of men.

2. They were dispersed as outcasts; but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, v. 3. See Deut. xxx. 4. Ezek. xxxiv. 12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

3. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in,

no dwelling-place to rest in, v. 4. *When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands*, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts, *They wandered in the wilderness*, where there was no trodden path, no company, but a *solitary way*; no lodging, no conveniences, no accommodations, no inhabited city where they might have quarters of refreshment. But *God led them forth by the right way*, (v. 7.) directed them to an inn, nay, directed them to a home, *that they might go to a city of habitation*, which was inhabited; nay, which they themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly, whose way lay through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out, and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places, both to bait in, and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years; it is said, (Deut. xxxii. 10.) *God led them about*, and yet here *he led them by the right way*. God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear, at last, to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here *no continuing city*, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims; but we are under the guidance of his wise and good providence, committing ourselves to which, we shall be *led in the right way to the city that has foundations*.

4. They were ready to perish for hunger; (v. 5.) *Their soul even fainted in them*, spent with the fatigues of their journey, and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. They that have constant plenty, and are, every day, fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and to have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to *satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness*, v. 9. Israel's wants were seasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has led us, has fed us, all our life long, unto this day; has fed us with food convenient; has provided food for the soul, and *filled the hungry soul with goodness*. *They that hunger and thirst after righteousness*, after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly *replenished with the goodness of his house*, both in grace and glory.

Now for all this, they who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks; (v. 8.) *Oh that men* (it is meant especially of those men whom God has graciously relieved) *would praise the Lord for his goodness* to them in particular, and *for his wonderful works* to others of the *children of men*. Note, (1.) God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power, considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace, considering the unworthiness, of those he shows mercy to. (2.) It is expected of those who receive mercy from God, that they return praise to him. (3.) We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God: to others as well as to ourselves.

10. Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; 11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High; 12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was none to help*.

13. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. 14. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God toward prisoners and captives. Observe,

1. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to *sit in darkness*, (v. 10.) in dark dungeons, close prisoners. It intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate, they sit *in the shadow of death*; which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are *bound in affliction*, and many times in *iron*, as Joseph. Thus sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

2. The cause of this affliction; (v. 11.) It is, *because they rebelled against the words of God*. Wiltful sin is rebellion *against the words of God*; it is a contradiction to his truths, and a violation of his laws. *They contemned the counsel of the Most High*, and thought they neither needed it, nor could be the better for it; and they that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. They that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences, nor the just reproofs of their friends, *contemn the counsel of the Most High*, and for this they are *bound in affliction*, both to punish them for, and to reclaim them from, their rebellions.

3. The design of this affliction, and that is, to bring *down their heart*, (v. 12.) to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring, thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's designs, and walk contrary to him, in them, if our hearts be unhumiliated and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour, the honour sunk? Are those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is, to pray; (v. 13.) *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble*, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who, when they were at liberty, could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, who formerly thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it.

5. Their deliverance out of the affliction; *They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them*, v. 13. *He brought them out of darkness into light*, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant; *brought them out of the shadow of death* to the comforts of life; and their liberty was to them life from the dead, v. 14. Were they fettered? *He brake their bands asunder*. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? *He brake the gates of brass, and the bars of iron*, wherewith those gates were made fast, he did not put back, but *cut in sunder*. Note, When God will work deliverance, the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates

of brass, and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people, (he was with Joseph in the prison,) so they cannot keep them in, when the time, the set time, for their enlargement is come.

6. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed; (v. 15.) *Let them praise the Lord for his goodness*, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, *the world and they that dwell therein*.

17. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted: 18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble; he saveth them out of their distresses. 20. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. 21. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life, which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

1. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves, and then it is our duty to pray, v. 17. 19.

(1.) It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently; *Fools, because of their transgression, are thus afflicted*; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed, and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, make it necessary. Sinners are fools, they wrong themselves, and all against their own interests; not only their spiritual, but their secular, interest. They prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out their foolishness that is bound up in their heart.

(2.) The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness; (v. 18.) when people are sick, *their soul abhors all manner of meat*; they not only have no desire to eat, nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it; and here they may read their sin in their punishment; they that doated most on the meat that perisheth, when they come to be sick, are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed; what they took too much of, now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the stomach is gone the life is as good as gone; *They draw near unto the gates of death*; they are, in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, as ready to be turned to destruction.

(3.) Then is a proper time for prayer; *Then they cry unto the Lord*, v. 19. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for: prayer is a salve for every sore.

2. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this Job xxxiii. 18, 28.

(1.) When those that are sick call upon God, he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him, and he *saves them out of their distresses*; (v. 19.) he removes their griefs, and prevents their fears. [1.] He does it easily; *He sent his word and healed them*, v. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking; he said, *Be clean, Be whole*, and the work was done; it may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word, and heals souls; convicts, converts, sanctifies, them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness, God in his providence does but speak it, and it is done. [2.] He does it effectually; he *delivereth them out of their destructions*, that they shall neither be destroyed, nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do, who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and raises up; who *turneth man almost to destruction*, and yet saith, *Return*.

(2.) When those that have been sick are recovered, they must return to God an answer of praise; (v. 21, 22.) *Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness*, and let them particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service; *let them sacrifice with thanksgiving*; not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. *And let them declare his works with rejoicing*, to his honour, and for the encouragement of others. *The living, the living, they shall praise him*.

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. 27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. 28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 32. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon *them* to give glory to God, who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

1. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, v. 23, 24. It appears to them *that go down to the sea in ships*, as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or passengers, *that do business in great waters*; and surely none will expose themselves there but those that have business; among all Solomon's pleasant things, we do not read of any

pleasure-boat he had; but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection. *These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders*, which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land; and what passes at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder, its vastness, its softness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it, and manages it.

2. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here,

(1.) How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. *Then wonders begin to appear in the deep*, when God *commands and raises the strong wind*, which *fulfils his word*, cxlviii. 8. He raises the winds, as a prince by his commission raises forces. Satan pretends to be the *prince of the power of the air*; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy, it *lifts up the waves of the sea*, v. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to *mount up to the heavens*, and then couch again, as if they would *go down to the depths*, v. 26. A stranger, who had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave would bury it, and it would never come up again: and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, does by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed, the *soul of the seaman melts because of trouble*; and when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea, can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears, but *they reel to and fro*, the tossing makes them giddy, and they *stagger* and are sick, it may be, *like a drunken man*; the whole ship's crew are in confusion, and quite *at their wit's end*, (v. 27.) not knowing what to do more for their own preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, Jonah i. 5, &c.

(2.) How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them, is, to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for *then they will cry unto the Lord*, v. 28. We have a saying, "Let them that would learn to pray, go to sea;" I say, Let them that will go to sea, learn to pray, and accustom themselves to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, *cried every man to his god*; but they that have the Lord for their God, have a present and powerful Help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wit's end, they are not at their faith's end.

(3.) How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers; *He brings them out of the danger*; and, [1.] The sea is still; *He makes the storm a calm*, v. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man, *that even the winds and the seas obeyed him*. [2.] The seamen are made easy; *They are glad, because they be quiet*; quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear, of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. [3.] The voyage becomes prosperous and successful; *so he brings them to their desired haven*, v. 30. Thus he carries his people safe through all the storms

and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-ward; and lands them, at length, in the desired harbour.

(4.) How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially who have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness, to the glory of God. Let them do it privately, in their closets and families. Let them *praise the Lord for his goodness* to themselves and others, *v. 31.* Let them do it publicly, (*v. 32.*) *in the congregation of the people, and in the assembly of the elders;* there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; 34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. 35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. 36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39. Again, they are diminished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is no way.* 41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock. 42. The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43. Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

I. He gives some instances of these revolutions;

1. Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, (1.) The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it unservicable, *v. 33, 34.* Land watered with *rivers* is sometimes *turned into a wilderness*, and that which had been full of *water-springs*, now has not so much as *water-streams*; it is *turned into dry and sandy ground*, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a *fruitful land* is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punishes the *wickedness of them that dwell therein*: as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to them that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine. (2.) The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a *wilderness*, a land of drought, *into water-springs*, *v. 35.* The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless,

worthless, spot of ground, as was foretold, Deut. xxix. 23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and *more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked.* Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

2. Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished, and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, (1.) We see many greatly increasing, whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean, and made no figure, *v. 36-38.* Those that were *hungry*, are made to *dwell in fruitful lands*; they take root, gain a settlement, and *prepare a city for habitation* for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must *prepare a city of habitation*, so lodgings, though ever so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must *sow the fields, and plant vineyards*; (*v. 37.*) for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water-springs, will not *yield fruits of increase*, unless they be sown; nor will vineyards be had, unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it does encourage, diligence; and, ordinarily, *the hand of the diligent*, by the blessing of God, *makes rich*, *v. 38.* *He blesses them also, so that they are*, in a little time, *multiplied greatly, and he diminishes not their cattle.* As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures *increase and multiply*; (Gen. i. 22.) and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways, if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. (2.) We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing; (*v. 39.*) *Again they are diminished and brought low* by adverse providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing; and often those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it, that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. Hence it is called *deceitful riches*, and the *mammon of unrighteousness*. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by *oppression, affliction, and sorrow*, as he tempted Job, and brought him low.

3. Those that are high and great in the world, are abased, and those that were mean and despicable, are advanced to honour, *v. 40, 41.* We have seen, (1.) Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. *He poured contempt upon them*, even among those that have idolized them. Them that exalt themselves God will abase; and, in order thereunto, will infatuate; he makes *them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.* He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and drives them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, or what measure to take. We met with this before, Job xii. 24, 25. (2.) Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour; (*v. 41.*) *Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust, to the throne of glory*, 1 Sam. ii. 8. Ps. cxlii. 7, 8. Those that were afflicted, and trampled on, are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in sub-

jection. That which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is, the multitude of their children; *He maketh him families like a flock of sheep*, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat, sent them mouths, *Happy is the man that has his quiver filled with arrows*, for he shall boldly *speak with the enemy in the gate*, cxxvii. 5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up families, and in building them up. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

II. He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these, are of use,

1. For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure; (v. 42.) *The righteous shall see it, and rejoice* in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see despised virtue advanced, and impious pride brought low to the dust; to see it evinced beyond dispute, that *verily there is a God that judges in the earth*.

2. For the silencing of sinners; *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the Divine Providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect *stop the mouth of all iniquity*. When sinners see how their punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness, (v. 43.) *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things*, these various dispensations of Divine Providence, *even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*. Here is, (1.) A desirable end proposed; and that is, rightly to *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*. It is of great use to us, in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness; to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it; that his *loving-kindness may be before our eyes*, xxvi. 3. (2.) A proper means prescribed for attaining this end; and that is, a due observing of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Luke ii. 19. (3.) A commendation of the use of this means, as an instance of true wisdom; *Whoso is wise*, let him by this both *prove his wisdom, and improve it*. A prudent observation of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise, and concludes with prayer, and faith is at work in both. I. David here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, v. 1. . 5. II. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, and putting them in suit, v. 6. . 13. The former part is taken out of Ps. lviii. 7, &c. the latter out of Ps. lx. 5, &c. and both with very little variation; to teach us, that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes convenient, to gather some verses out of one psalm, and some out of another, and to put them together, to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm, we must give glory to God, and take comfort to ourselves.

A song or psalm of David.

1. **O** GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.
2. Awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will

awake early. 3. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4. For thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth:

We may here learn to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art.

1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart; our heart must be employed in the duty, (else we make nothing of it,) and engaged to the duty; (v. 1.) *O God, my heart is fixed*, and then *I will sing and give praise*. Wandering straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told that here is work enough for them all.

2. We must praise God with freeness of expression; I will praise him *with my glory*, with my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter, our tongue must be as *the pen of a ready writer*, xlv. 1. David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, *Awake, my psaltery and harp*. Whatever gift we excel in, we must praise God with.

3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner, and not carelessly; (v. 2.) *Awake, psaltery and harp*; let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. *I myself will awake early* to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him, and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness; (v. 3.) *I will praise thee among the people of the Jews*; nay, *I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth*. Whatever company we are in, we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us; for it looks like being ashamed of our Master.

5. We must, in our praises, magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner; (v. 4.) mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see further than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth, there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen in the other world.

6. Since we find ourselves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all, to his own glory, to get himself honour, and make himself a name; (v. 5.) *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens*, higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises; and *let thy glory be spread over all the earth*. *Father, glorify thine own name; thou hast glorified it, glorify it again*. It is to be our first petition, *Hallowed be thy name*.

6. That thy beloved may be delivered, save with thy right hand, and answer me.
7. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8. Gilead is

mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my law-giver; 9. Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. 10. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 11. *Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off?* and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? 12. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 13. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

1. We must be public-spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts, at the throne of grace, the concerns of the church of God, *v. 6.* It is God's *beloved*, and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon we are answered, if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for ourselves. *Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have. Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended;* (lxxii. 19, 20.) he desires no more.

2. We must, in prayer, act faith upon the power and promise of God; upon his power, *Save with thy right hand*, which is mighty to save; and upon his promise, *God has spoken in his holiness*, in his holy word, to which he has sworn by his holiness, and therefore *I will rejoice, v. 7.* What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God has said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

3. We must, in prayer, take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in the possession of it. God had promised David to give him, (1.) The hearts of his subjects; and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already, *Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah*, they are all my own, *v. 8.* With such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David; he will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; for so has he *spoken in his holiness*; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him, he will *lose none*; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, *John vi. 37.* And, (2.) The necks of his enemies; these are promised, and therefore David looks upon *Moab*, and *Edom*, and *Philistia*, as his own already; (*v. 9.*) *Over Philistia will I triumph*, which explains *lx. 8.* *Philistia, triumph thou because of me*; which some think should be read, *O my soul, triumph thou over Philistia.* Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall in due time be made his footstool, *though all things are not yet put under him*, *Heb. ii. 8.*

4. We must take encouragement from the beginning of mercy, to pray and hope for the perfecting of it; (*v. 10, 11.*) "*Who will bring me into the strong cities*, that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued?" The question, probably, was to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, What methods they should take to subdue the Edomites, and to reduce that country? but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's

hands, *Wilt not thou, O God?* Certainly thou wilt. It is probable that he spake with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom, because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that *the elder should serve the younger*, and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, *Gen. xxvii. 37.*

5. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though Providence has, in some instances, frowned upon us; "*Though thou hast cast us off*, yet thou wilt now go forth with our hosts, *v. 11.* Thou wilt comfort us again, after the time that thou hast afflicted us." Adverse events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in, whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint.

6. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature; (*v. 12.*) "*Lord, give us help from trouble*, prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us." It is not unseasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from Heaven: and it is a good plea, *Vain is the help of man.* "It is really so, and therefore we are undone if thou do not help us; we apprehend it to be so, and therefore depend upon thee for help, and have the more reason to expect it."

7. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, *v. 13.* (1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of ourselves, it is only *through God that we shall do valiantly.* Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, *but through Christ strengthening him*, *Phil. iv. 13.* (2.) When we have acquitted ourselves ever so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that *treads down our enemies*, else we, with all our valour, cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

PSALM CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against, was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings, and his persecutors, for that imprecation (*v. 8.*) is applied to Judas, *Acts i. 20.* The rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions, not of passion, but of the Spirit of prophecy. 1. He lodges a complaint in the court of heaven for the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies, and with it an appeal to the righteous God, *v. 1. . 5.* 2. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, *v. 6. . 20.* 3. He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition, *v. 21. . 29.* 4. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, *v. 30, 31.* In singing this psalm, we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God, and keep close to him.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **H**OLD not thy peace, O God of my praise; 2. For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3. They compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. 4. For my love they are my adversaries: but

I give myself unto prayer. 5. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people, that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply themselves as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

1. He refers himself to God's judgment; (v. 1.) "*Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence*, xvii. 2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee." God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence; "Lord," says he, "do not always do so." The title he gives to God, is observable, "*O God of my praise*; the God in whom *I glory*, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own; from whom I have every thing that is my praise; the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising." He calls God the *God of his mercy*, (lix. 10.) here *the God of his praise*; forasmuch as God is the *God of our mercies*, we must make him the *God of our praises*; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

2. He complains of his enemies, showing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. (1.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they are *wicked*, they delight in doing mischief, (v. 2.) their words are *words of hatred*, v. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man, because of his goodness. "They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and *fight against me to cut me off, if they could*." (2.) They were notorious liars; now a liar is one of the seven things which the Lord hates. "They are *deceitful* in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, *with a lying tongue*." They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies. (3.) They were both politic and restless in their designs; "They *compassed me about* on all sides, so that, which way soever I looked, I could see nothing but what made against me." (4.) They were unjust; their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless; "They *have fought against me without a cause*, I never gave them any provocation," nay, which was worst of all, (5.) They were very ungrateful, and *rewarded him evil for good*, v. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him; but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated, because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him; (v. 4.) *For my love they are my adversaries*. The more he endeavoured to gratify them, the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible that any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

3. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that; *But I give myself unto prayer*, (v. 4.) *I pray*, so it is in the original; "I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer." A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles, Acts vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, 1 Sam.

xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it: Let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*. Now, herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with *words of hatred* and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his *good works*; (John x. 32.) and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them; *Father, forgive them*.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. 8. Let his days be few: *and let another take his office*. 9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places. 11. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the stranger spoil his labour. 12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13. Let his posterity be cut off; *and in the generation following let their name be blotted out*. 14. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16. Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 19. Let it be unto him as the garment *which covereth him*, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20. *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul*.

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them; and, in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, (John xix. 11.) he imprecates and predicts his destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan friars and other monks, that, if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, who, being at variance with her own and only son, hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. Greater impiety can scarcely be

imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ; to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

I. The imprecations here are very terrible; woe, and a thousand woes, to that man against whom God says *Amen* to them: and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent, to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this bad man,

1. That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation; (*v. 6, 7.*) *Set thou a wicked man over him, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he has been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. Set the wicked one over him, so some; that is, Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face. Let Satan stand on his right hand, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that Advocate who alone can say, The Lord rebuke thee, Satan; (Zech. iii. 1, 2.) when he shall be judged at men's bar, let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out, and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompense shall come. Let his prayer become sin, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked are now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.*

2. That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. (1.) That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst, by the sword of justice; *Let his days be few, or shortened, as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live; (v. 8.) such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* (2.) That, consequently, all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments; *Let another take his office.* This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, Acts i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. (3.) That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that *his wife should be made a widow, and his children fatherless*, by his untimely death, *v. 9.* Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, might still subsist in comfort; but they shall be *vagabonds, and shall beg*; they shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek their bread, (*v. 10.*) because they are conscious to themselves that all mankind have reason to hate them for their father's sake. (4.) That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated; (*v. 11.*)

Let the extortioner, the officer, seize all that he has, and let the stranger, who was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour, either for his crimes or for his debts, Job v. 4, 5. (5.) That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never showed mercy, *there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, v. 12.* The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness this way; the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them, which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity? (6.) That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace; (*v. 13.*) *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction, so Dr. Hammond; and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and (v. 15.) let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.*

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery, upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ: their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

II. The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

1. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account, (*v. 14, 15.*) *the iniquity of his fathers, and the sin of his mother.* These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood, justly does the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, *filled up the measure of their fathers*, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us, and on our children.*

2. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

(1.) He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink; (*v. 16.*) *He remembered not to show mercy, remembered not these considerations which would have induced him to show mercy; remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him; but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved; and slew the broken in heart, whom he should have comforted and healed.* Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

(2.) He had loved cursing, and therefore let the curse come upon his head, *v. 17-19.* These that were out of the reach of his cruelty, he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing; he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give no body a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. He clothed himself with cursing; he was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And*

let him have enough of it. Was he fond of cursing? *let God's curse come into his bowels like water, and swell him as with a dropsy, and let it soak like oil into his bones.* The word of the curse is *quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow*: it works powerfully and effectually; it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side *as a garment*, v. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the *belly to swell and the thigh to rot.* This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecations with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, "I wish it may be so," but "I know it shall be so;" *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord*, v. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus: his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, shall be *brought forth and slain before him.* And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21. But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24. My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads. 26. Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy; 27. That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it. 28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice. 29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame; and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

1. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which probably gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him; "*I am poor and needy, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help.*" (1.) He was troubled in mind; (v. 22.) *My heart is troubled within me*; not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt; and a *wounded spirit who can bear?* who can heal? (2.) He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; *I am gone like the shadow when it declines*; as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow, sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, *like the shadow when it declines.* (3.) He was unsettled; *tossed up and*

down like the locust; his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. (4.) His body was wasted, and almost worn away; (v. 24.) *My knees are weak through fasting*; either forced fasting, for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick; or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others, xxxv. 13.—lxix. 10. "*My flesh fails of fatness*; it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones." But it is better to have this leanness in the body, while the soul prospers and is in health, than, like Israel, to have leanness sent into the soul, while the body is feasted. (5.) He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies; (v. 25.) his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter; upon both those accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorn of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often *afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.*

2. He prays for mercy for himself, in general, (v. 21.) "*Do thou for me, O God the Lord*; appear for me, act for me." If God be for us, he will do for us, will do *more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think.* He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom; "*LORD, do for me what seems good in thine eyes.* Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though, for the present, it may seem to make against me." More particularly, he prays, (v. 26.) "*Help me, O LORD my God, O save me.* Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble: save me from sin, help me to do my duty." He prays, (v. 28.) "*Though they curse, bless thou.* Here, (1.) He despises the causeless curses of his enemies; *Let them curse.* He said of Shimei, *So let him curse.* They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than *the bird by wandering, or the swallow by flying*, Prov. xxvi. 2. (2.) He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; *Bless thou*, and then it is no matter though they *curse.* If God bless us, we need not care who curses us; for *how can they curse whom God has not cursed*, nay, whom he has blessed? Numb. xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent; and those whom we unjustly curse, may in faith expect, and pray for, God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ *found him*, John ix. 35. When men, without cause, say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition, *Let them curse, but bless thou.* He prays, (v. 28.) *Let thy servant rejoice.* They that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

3. He prays that his enemies might *be ashamed*, (v. 28.) *clothed with shame*; (v. 29.) that they might *cover themselves with their own confusion*; that they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and *manifest their folly before all men*; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be *filled with shame*, as the adversaries of the Jews were, Neh. vi. 16. Nay, this he prays, that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies: sinners, indeed, bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents

that take shame to themselves, and *cover themselves with their own confusion.*

4. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; *Do for me, for thy name's sake,* (v. 21.) especially the honour of his goodness, by which he has proclaimed his name; "*Deliver me, because thy mercy is good;* it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but *according to thy mercy;* let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure, of my salvation."

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith; joy, in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. (1.) He promises God that he will praise him; (v. 30.) "*I will greatly praise the Lord,* not only with my heart, but *with my mouth;* *I will praise him,* not in secret only, but *among the multitude.*" (2.) He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God; (v. 31.) *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor,* nigh to him, a present Help: he shall stand at his right hand, as his Patron and Advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; *to save him from those that condemn his soul,* and would execute it, if they could. God was David's Protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, *stood at his right hand,* so that he was *not moved,* (xvi. 8.) saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that *suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him.*

PSALM CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only, and wholly, concerning Christ, the Messiah, promised to the fathers, and expected by them. It is plain that the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, it however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David, in spirit, calls Christ his Lord, though he was his Son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves gruelled, than to make it a question whether David does indeed speak of the Messiah or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Matth. xxii. 41, &c.* Of him therefore, no doubt, the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, with reference both to his humiliation and his exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account. I. His prophetic office, v. 2. II. His priestly office, v. 4. III. His kingly office, v. 1, 3, 5, 6. IV. His estates of humiliation and exaltation, v. 7. In singing this psalm, we must act faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, by whom we hope to be ruled, and taught, and saved, for ever; and as the Prophet, Priest, and King, of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A psalm of David.

1. **T**HE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3. Thy people *shall be willing* in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm *David's creed*, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being

found in it: the title calls it *David's psalm*: for, in the believing foresight of the Messiah, he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we, in singing it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold.

Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

I. He is David's Lord; we must take special notice of this, because he himself does; (*Matth. xxii. 43.*) *David, in spirit, calleth him Lord.* And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham has paid him *tithes*, (*Heb. vii. 4.*) so we may by this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus, that David, that great man, *called him his Lord*: by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his Lord. Some think he calls him his *Lord*, because he was the Lord that was to descend from him; his Son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her *Saviour*; (*Luke i. 47.*) even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones.

II. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father* this honour and glory; (*2 Pet. i. 17.*) from him who is the Fountain of honour and power, and *takes it not to himself.* He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestable; for what God has said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God has said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

III. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and intrusted with an absolute sovereign power, both in heaven and in earth; *Sit thou at my right hand.* Sitting is a resting posture: after his services and sufferings, he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; he sits to give law, to give judgment: it is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever; sitting at the right hand of God denotes both his dignity and his dominion, the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him, by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, pass through his hand.

IV. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be, in a manner, at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world: there are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies *will be made his footstool*; he will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place, and such a propriety there will be in it; he will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will *tread down the wicked*, *Mal. iv. 3.* 3. God the Father has undertaken to do it; *I will make them thy footstool*, who can do it. 4. It will not be done immediately. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool: this the apostle observes, (*Heb. ii. 8.*) *We see not yet all things put under him.* Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his set-

ting his feet, at last, on the necks of all his enemies.

V. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem; (v. 2.) "*The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion, by which thy kingdom shall be erected, maintained, and administered.*" The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is *King upon the holy hills of Zion*, (ii. 6.) in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain on which the law was given, Heb. xii. 18, 24. Gal. iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David; for he was the Son of David, and was to have the *throne of his father David*. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it; the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, (Isa. liii. 1. Rom. i. 16.) the gospel coming in word, and in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. By the word and Spirit of God, souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth; he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the word, and *ministered the Spirit*, Gal. iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin, at Jerusalem. See Luke xxiv. 47, 49. *Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith*, Isa. ii. 3. Note, The gospel of Christ, being sent of God, is *mighty through God* to do wonders, 2 Cor. x. 4. It is *the rod of Christ's strength*. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, denoting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, denoting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both *the great and good Shepherd*.

VI. That his kingdom, being set up, shall be maintained and kept up in the world, in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, shall give laws, and govern his subjects by them; shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule *in the midst of his enemies*. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth *as sheep in the midst of wolves*: he knows *where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is*; (Rev. ii. 13.) and this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, notwithstanding all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. *Great is the truth, and will prevail*.

VII. That he should have a great number of subjects, who should be to him for a name and a praise, v. 3.

1. That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited; *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself *a peculiar people*, Tit. ii. 14. They are his by right, antecedent to their consent; he *had much*

people in Corinth before they were converted, Acts xviii. 10.

2. That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; alluding to servants that choose their service, and are not brought like captives to it; they love their masters, and would not go out free: or there may be an allusion to soldiers that are volunteers, and not pressed men; "Here am I, send me;" or to sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; we *present ourselves living sacrifices*. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire complacency and satisfaction.

3. That they should be so *in the day of his power*; *In the day of thy muster*, so some; When thou art enlisting soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be listed; let but the standard be set up, and the *Gentiles will seek to it*, Isa. xi. 10.—ix. 3. Or, When thou art drawing them cut to battle, they shall be willing to *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*, Rev. xiv. 4. *In the day of thine armies*, so some; When the first preachers of the gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are *thy people shall be willing*; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom. *In the day of thy strength*, so we take it. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great Author, and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, beside the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse, this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

4. That they should be so *in the beauty of holiness*; that is, (1.) They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the Beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. (2.) They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for *by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest*. (3.) They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family, and that which *becomes his house for ever*. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear: the armies of heaven *follow him in fine linen, clean and white*, Rev. xix. 14.

5. That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him; the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince; *From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth*, abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were *multitudes that believed*; a *remnant of Jacob*, that was as *a dew from the Lord*, Mic. v. 7. Isa. lxiv. 4, 8. Or thus, "*From the womb of the morning, from their very childhood, thou hast the dew of thy people's youth*, their hearts and affections when they are young;" it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee." *The dew of the youth* is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful, show of young people flocking to Christ, which would be to the world as dew to the

ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

6. That he should be not only a King, but a Priest, *v. 4.* The same Lord that said, *Sit thou at my right hand, swear, and will not repent, Thou art a priest*, that is, *Be thou a priest*; for by the word of his oath he was consecrated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ is a Priest; he was appointed to that office, and faithfully executes it; he is *ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin*, (Heb. v. 1.) to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's acceptance. He is God's Minister to us, and our Advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. (2.) He is a *Priest for ever*; he was designed for a Priest, in God's eternal counsels; he was a Priest to the Old Testament saints, and will be a Priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xiii. 8. He is said to be a *Priest for ever*; not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace than this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. (3.) He is made a Priest with an oath, which the apostle argues, to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. *The Lord has sworn*, to show that in the commission there was no implicit reserve of a power of revocation; for *he will not repent*, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 30. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of Christians: the priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it might be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. (4.) He is a Priest, not of the order of Aaron, but of that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was, upon many accounts, superior, to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood: Melchizedek was a *priest upon his throne*, so is Christ, (Zech. vi. 13.) King of righteousness, and King of peace: Melchizedek had no successor, nor has Christ, his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, (Heb. vii.) and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office; which he shows was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For, as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

5. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

1. Conquering his enemies, (*v. 5, 6.*) in order to the making of them his *footstool*, *v. 1.* Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition, and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they may be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interest of his kingdom, among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe here,

1. The Conqueror: *The Lord, Adonai*; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed; he shall make his own part good against his enemies; *The Lord at thy right hand, O church*, so some; *that is, the Lord* that is nigh unto his people, and a very present Help to them, that is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear

for them against his and their enemies. See *cix. 3.* *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, *xvi. 8.* Some observe, that, when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates, that if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must *bestir ourselves*, 2 Sam. v. 24. Or rather, *At thy right hand, O God*, referring to *v. 1.* in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies, as happiness to his people.

2. The time fixed for this victory; *in the day of his wrath*; that is, the time appointed for it; when the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, (1.) Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to *kiss the Son*, for he can be *angry*, *ii. 12.* And we read of the *wrath of the Lamb*, *Rev. vi. 16.* (2.) There is a day of wrath set, a year of *recompenses for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed*. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come, it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem: but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, *Rev. vi. 17.*

3. The extent of this victory. (1.) It shall return very high; *He shall strike through kings*. The greatest of men, that set themselves against Christ, shall be made to fall before him; though they be *kings of the earth*, and rulers, accustomed to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, *ii. 2-5.* Be their power among men ever so despotic, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength ever so great, their policies ever so deep, Christ will be too hard for them; and above them, wherein they deal proudly. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. (2.) It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up *among the heathen*, and in many countries, wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only, but his *hand, shall find them out*, (*xxi. 8.*) and his wrath shall *follow them*. He will *plead with all nations*, *Joel iii. 2.*

4. The equity of this victory; *He shall judge among them*. It is not a military execution, which is done in fury, but a judicial one; before he condemns and slays, he will judge; he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be *justified when he speaks*, and the *heavens may declare his righteousness*. See *Rev. xix. 1, 2.*

5. The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall strike them through, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; he shall *wound the heads*, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, (*Gen. iii. 15.*) that he should *bruise the serpent's head*. He shall *wound the head of his enemies*; (*Ps. lxxviii. 21.*) some read it, *He shall wound him that is the head over many countries*; either Satan, or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall *consume with the breath of his mouth*. He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that he shall *fill the places with the dead bodies*. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See *Isa. xxxiv. 3, &c.* *Ezek. xxxix. 12, 14.* *Rev. xiv. 20.*—*xix. 17, 18.* The filling of the valleys (for so some read it) *with dead bodies*, perhaps, denotes the *filling of hell* (which is sometimes compared to the valley of *Hinnom*, *Isa. xxxix. 33.* *Jer. vii. 32.*) with *darned souls* for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

II. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, (v. 7.) for their benefit.

1. He shall be humbled; *He shall drink of the brook in the way*, that bitter cup which the Father put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle-water out of the lakes in the highway; so some. The wrath of God, running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the *brook in the way*, in the way of his undertaking, which he must go through; or which ran in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven. Christ drank of this brook, when he was made a Curse for us, and therefore, when he entered upon his suffering, *he went over the brook Kidron*; (John xviii. 1.) he drank deep of this black brook, (so Kidron signifies,) this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted; *Therefore shall he lift up the head*. When he died, he bowed the head; (John xix. 30.) but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a Conqueror, yea, more than a Conqueror. This denotes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it; (Col. ii. 15.) *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them*. David spake as a type of him in this, (Ps. xxvii. 6.) *Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. Because he drank of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head, and so, lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him, shall also reign with him.

PSALM CXI.

This, and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise, the title of it is *Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord*; intimating that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm, with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly; two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the two last. The psalmist, exhorting to praise God, 1. Sets himself for an example, v. 1. II. Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works, and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, v. 2...9. III. He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, v. 10.

1. **P**RAISE ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2. The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious, and full of compassion. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being *Hallelujah*, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

1. He resolves to praise God himself, v. 1. What

duty we call others to, we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts; for such is the psalmist's resolution here. *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart*. My heart, my whole heart, being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

2. He recommends to us the works of the Lord, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him—the dispensations of his providence toward the world, the church, and particular persons.

(1.) God's works are very magnificent; great like himself, there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling: they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to inquire more particularly into them, that *the works of the Lord are great*, v. 2. There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one; (v. 3.) it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of Providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, *O wheel*, Ezek. x. 13. Take all together, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

(2.) They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Note, [1.] All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he does; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into, the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. [2.] They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history, we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. [3.] These works of God, that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; they that seek shall find; (so some read it;) they are found of all them that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns; (so Dr. Hammond;) for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, xxv. 14.

3. They are all just and holy; His righteousness endures for ever. Whatever he does, he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, (Eccl. iii. 14.) because the righteousness of them does.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them; (v. 4.) He has made his wonderful works to be remembered; he has done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he has instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover. He has made him a memorial by his wonderful works; so some read it: see Isa. lxiii. 17. By that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are kind; in them the Lord shows that he is *gracious and full of compassion*. As of the works of creation, so of the works of Providence, we must say, They are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, *The Lord God is gracious and merciful*, Exod. xxiv. 6. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion, that *he has given meat to them that fear him*, v. 5. He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them: so he does to others by common providence; but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; for it follows, *He will be ever mindful of his covenant*; so that they can taste covenant-love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness. Others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, Gen. xv. 14. When God *brake the heads of the leviathan*, he gave him to be meat to his people, Ps. lxxiv. 14. *He has given prey to them that fear him*; so the margin has it, not only fed them, but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnest of what he will do, according to his promise: *He will ever be mindful of his covenant*, for he has ever been so; and as he never did, so he never will, let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet *he will ever be mindful of his covenant*.

6. He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7. The works of his hands are verity and judgment: all his commandments are sure. 8. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9. He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name. 10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

We are taught to give glory to God,

1. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people of Israel, of old and of late; *He has showed his people the power of his works*, (v. 6.) in what he has wrought for them; many a time he has given proofs of his omnipotence, and showed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are specified, to show the power of his works.

(1.) The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that *he might give them*, or in giving them, *the heritage of the heathen*. This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued; and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel, and became tributaries to David. Hencein God showed his sovereignty, in disposing of kingdoms as he pleases, and his might, in making good his disposals. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel, or stay his hand?

(2.) The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had

sold themselves into the hand of their enemies; (v. 9.) *He sent redemption unto his people*; not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterward; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

2. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

(1.) What God has done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot; (v. 7.) *The works of his hand are verity and judgment*; (v. 8.) *they are done in truth and uprightness*; all he does is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom, and the purpose of his will; all well done; and therefore there is nothing to be altered or amended, but it is firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is true will last, will neither go to decay, nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

(2.) What God has said shall never be unsaid; *All his commandments are sure*; all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; *Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* No doubt, he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable, and not to be repealed. His promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of no effect. They are established, and therefore *they stand fast for ever and ever*, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood make them *unstable in all their ways*, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation; *He has commanded his covenant for ever*. God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that has an incontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do, and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant, and what he has threatened in the curses of it, cv. 8.

3. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because *holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom*, therefore *his praise endureth for ever*; he is to be everlastingly praised.

(1.) Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see, and say, that God is great, and greatly to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appear in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy, therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of, and mentioned, with a holy awe. Note, What is holy, is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, lxxviii. 35. Lev. x. 3.

(2.) Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God, that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him, and obedience to him, are as much our interest as they are our duty.

[1.] Our reverence of him is so; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. It is not only

reasonable that we should fear God, because his name is reverend, and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom, it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, that is, as we read it, *it is the beginning of wisdom*; men never begin to be wise, till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it; or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent: the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom, to worship God, and give honour to him, as our Father and Master. They manage well who always act under the government of his holy fear.

[2.] Our obedience to him is so; *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments; not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding; *First*, They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God. Compare Prov. iii. 4. *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding.* God and man will look upon those as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. *Secondly*, They understand well. 1. It is a sign that they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interests best, that make God's law their rule, and are in every thing ruled by it. A *great* understanding they have, that know God's commandments, and can discourse learnedly of them; but a *good* understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. 2. It is the way to understand better; *A good understanding are they to all that do them*; the fear of the Lord, and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them *wise unto salvation*. *If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ*, John vii. 17. *Good success have all they that do them*, so the margin; according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, (Josh. i. 8.) *Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and shalt have good success.* We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord, than to the good God; *His praise endures for ever*: it is not of men, perhaps, but it is of God; (Rom. ii. 29.) and that praise which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

PSALM CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically, as the former is, and is (like the former) entitled, *Hallelujah*, though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God, and whatever we have the pleasure of, he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shows how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. We have here, I. The character of the righteous, v. 1. II. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. There is a blessedness entailed upon their posterity, v. 2. 2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. (1.) Prosperity outward and inward, v. 3. (2.) Comfort, v. 4. (3.) Wisdom, v. 5. (4.) Stability, v. 6. . 8. (5.) Honour, v. 6. 9. III. The misery of the wicked, v. 10. So that good and evil are set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm, we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer to the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him; as he is their Praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord, that there are a people in the world who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people; both which are owing entirely to the grace of God.

Now here we have,

1. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these premises are made.

(1.) They are well-principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not who cry, *Lord, Lord*, but who are indeed well-affected to his government. [1.] They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty, and deference to his will. The happy man is he that fears the Lord, v. 1. [2.] They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that fears the Lord, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, delights greatly in his commandments, is well-pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them, they are written in his heart, it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant, yoke; it is his delight to be searching into, and conversing with, God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, Ps. i. 2. He delights not only in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy, under God's government, as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he does in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion, and advantage by it.

(2.) They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright, (v. 2, 4.) who are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel-perfection.

(3.) They are both just and kind in all their dealings; He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous, (v. 4.) dares not do any wrong to any man, but does to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God, in the foregoing psalm, (v. 4.) He is gracious, and full of compassion; and here it is said of the good man, that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he does good with, is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so does he. One instance is given of his beneficence; (v. 5.) He shows favour, and lends. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower both to

industry and honesty. He is *gracious, and lends*; (xxxvii. 26.) he does it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity: he does it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

2. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer to these characters; Happiness, all happiness, *to the man that feareth the Lord*. Whatever men think or say of them, God says that they are blessed; and his saying so makes them so.

(1.) The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness; (*v. 2.*) *His seed shall be mighty on earth*; perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure, as his seed after him shall, for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to fix it firmly. When good men themselves are happy in heaven, their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own that it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed*: if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them; *beloved for the Father's sake*; (Rom. xi. 28.) for so runs the covenant; *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*; (Gen. xvii. 7.) while *the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned*; (Isa. xiv. 20.) Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

(2.) They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, *v. 3.* [1.] They shall be blessed with outward prosperity, as far as is good for them; *Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house*, not in his heart; for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns; perhaps not so much in his hand, (for he only begins to raise the estate,) but in his house; his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, [2.] That which is much better, is, that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. *His wealth shall be in his house*, for he must leave that to others; but *his righteousness* he himself shall have the comfort of to himself, it *endures for ever*. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition, shall *still hold fast his integrity*, which many, who kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing, when it does not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's *righteousness endures for ever*, in the *crown of righteousness which fades not away*.

(3.) They shall have comfort in affliction; (*v. 4.*) *Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*. It is here implied, that good men may be in affliction, the promise does not exempt them from that, they shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, *when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a Light to them*, Mic. vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome when their outward condition is clouded; *Sat lucis intus—There is light enough within*. Surrounded by Egyptian darkness, the Israelites had *light in their dwellings*. They shall be, in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest, the day dawns; nay, at evening time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

(4.) They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, *v. 5.* He that does good with

his estate, shall, through the providence of God, increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence; *He shall guide his affairs with discretion*; and his God *instructs him to discretion, and teaches him*, Isa. xxviii. 26. It is part of the character of a good man, that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity; *He shows favour and lends*; but then it is *with discretion*, that his charity may not be misplaced; he gives to proper objects what is proper to be given, and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him who thus uses discretion, that God will give him more. They who most use their wisdom, see most of their need of it, and *ask it of God*, who has promised to *give it liberally*, Jam. i. 5. *He will guide his words with judgment*; so it is in the original; and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom, than in the government of the tongue; blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

6. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his enemies. 9. He hath dispersed: he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever: his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

1. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability. It is the happiness of a good man, that *he shall not be moved for ever*, *v. 6.* Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm, and *he shall never be moved*; at least, *not moved for ever*; if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again quickly.

(1.) A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, a name for good things, with God and good people. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*; (*v. 6.*) in this sense, his *righteousness* (the memorial of it) *endures for ever*, *v. 9.* There are those that do all they can to sully his reputation, and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some, that have been eminently righteous, are *had in a lasting remembrance*, on earth; wherever the scripture is read, their good deeds are *told for a memorial* of them. And the memory of many a good man, that is dead and gone, is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever, with the reward of it, in the *crown of glory that fades not away*. They that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and their *righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory*; (1 Pet. i. 7.) then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man be *exalted with honour*, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men, now in their pride, *lift up their horns on high*, but they shall all be *cut off*, lxxv. 5, 10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have *defiled their horn in the dust*; (Job xvi. 15.) but the day is coming when it *shall be exalted with honour*. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men, is, their

liberality and bounty to the poor; *He has dispersed, he has given to the poor*; he has not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for, but he has dispersed it, *given a portion to seven, and also to eight, has sown beside all waters*, and by thus scattering he has increased: and this is his *righteousness*, which *endures for ever*. Alms are called *righteous*, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that, if we are not charitable, we are not just; we *withhold good from those to whom it is due*. The honour of this endures for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day; *I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat*. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

(2.) A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for *so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort; for *he shall not be afraid, his heart is established*, v. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character, and of the comfort, of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so, and grace to do so. Observe, [1.] It is the duty and interest of the people of God, not to be *afraid of evil tidings*; not to be afraid of hearing bad news; and when they do, not to be put into confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse; but, whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, *None of these things move me, neither will I fear, though the earth be moved*, xlv. 2. [2.] The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even, under all the unevenness of Providence, we are well-fortified against the agitations of the timorous. [3.] Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our Rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. [4.] They whose hearts are established by faith, will patiently wait till they have gained their point; *He shall not be afraid, till he see his desire upon his enemies*, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and, as Israel saw the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore. *Till he look upon his oppressors*, so Dr. Hammond; till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, (2 Tim. iii. 11.) *But out of them all the Lord delivered me*.

2. The vexation of sinners, v. 10. Two things shall fret them. (1.) The felicity of the righteous; *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour, and shall be grieved*. It will vex them to see their innocence cleared, and their low estate regarded, and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought, and hoped to see, the favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have *dominion over them*; (xlix. 14.) this will make them *gnash with their teeth, and pine away*. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the *rotteness of their bones*. But it will most fully

be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth*, to see *Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*; to see *all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out*. (2.) Their own disappointment; *The desire of the wicked shall perish*; their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

PSALM CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with *Hallelujah*; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. 1. We are here called upon, and urged, to praise God, v. 1-3. 11. We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths; in singing which, we must, with holy fear and love, give to God the glory of, 1. The elevations of his glory and greatness, v. 4, 5. 2. The condescensions of his grace and goodness, (v. 6-9.) which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. 2. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. 3. From the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, the LORD's name is to be praised. 4. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, 6. Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! 7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8. That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. 9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm,

I. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name. The invitation is very pressing; *Praise ye the Lord*, and again, and again, *Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name*, for it is to be praised, v. 1-3. This intimates, 1. That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. 2. That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and enlarged. 3. That it is work which we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. 4. That those who are much in praising God themselves, will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in, (there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough,) and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

Observe, (1.) From whom God has praise; from his own people; they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call, *Praise, O ye servants of the Lord*. They have most reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants know him best, and receive most of his favours, and it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master, and do him what honour they can; if they do not who should?

Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all Christians are a royal priesthood, *to show forth the praises of him that has called them*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord; they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

(2.) From whom he ought to have praise:

[1.] From all ages; (*v. 2.*) *from this time forth for evermore*; let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying, with the psalmist, *Blessed be his name now and always*.

[2.] From all places; *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same*, throughout the habitable world; let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun rising, (and those that do so must count upon it that the sun will set,) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. *God's name is to be praised*; it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from East to West, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be *blessed for ever*, (when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven,) so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in *every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God*; (Mal. i. 11.) then, *from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Lord's name shall be praised*, by some in all countries.

II. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that, to his praise, *v. 4, 5.* We are, in our praises, to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high. (1.) *High above all nations*; their kings, though ever so pompous; their people, though ever so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is *major singulis—greater than individuals*, he is *minor universis—less than the whole*, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; they are before him as *the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance*, Isa. xl. 15, 17. Let all the nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. (2.) *High above the heavens*; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, Lam. iii. 41. His glory is *above the heavens*, above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his; above what they do, for they are under his command, and do his pleasure; and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above *all blessing and praise*, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say, with holy admiration, *Who is like unto the Lord our God? Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him.* God is to be praised, as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he *dwells on high*, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the *lower world*, and mention that to his praise. He is a God

who exalts himself to dwell, who humbles himself in heaven, and in earth. Some think there is a transposition, *He exalts himself to dwell in heaven he humbles himself to behold on earth*; but the sense is plain enough, as we take it; only observe, God is said to *exalt himself*, and to *humble himself*, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the Fountain of his own honour, and the Spring of his own grace; God's condescending goodness appears,

(1.) In the cognizance he takes of the world below him; his glory is *above the nations*, and *above the heavens*, and yet neither is neglected by him; *God is great, yet he despises not any*, Job xxxvi. 5. *He humbles himself to behold* all his creatures, all his subjects, though he is infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency, and felicity, of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged as an act of wonderful condescension, that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth; (Dan. iv. 35.) even in this dominion he *humbles himself*. [1.] It is condescension in him to *behold the things in heaven*, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services, of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefitted by them. [2.] Much more is it condescension in him to *behold the things that are in the earth*, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about, our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth, and take our nature upon him, that he might *seek and save them that were lost*! Here indeed he humbled himself.

(2.) In the particular favour he sometimes shows to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lesser lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor does he only behold them, but does wenders for them, and things that are very surprising, cut of the common road of Providence, and chain of causes; which shows that the world is governed, not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

[1.] Those that have been long despicable, are sometimes, on a sudden, made honourable; (*v. 7, 8.*) *He raises up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes.* First, Thus God does sometimes magnify himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty; when he has some great work to do, he chooses to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it, by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles are sent from fishing to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the *wise and mighty*, (1 Cor. i. 27, 28.) that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. Secondly, Thus God does sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people who have long groaned under the burthen of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested, he was raised from the prison-dust, and *set with princes*. They that are wise will observe such returns of

Providence, and will understand by them *the loving-kindness of the Lord*. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfitly; for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust, (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it to the resurrection of the dead,) nay, out of the dunghill of sin, and *set among princes*, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purport, 1 Sam. ii. 6-8.

[2.] Those that have been long barren, are sometimes, on a sudden, made *fruitful*, v. 9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been, in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their reproach. *He makes the barren woman to keep house*, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family, must take the care of it; *bearing children and guiding the house* are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she *look well to the ways of her household*, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a *joyful mother of children*, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, *for joy that a man-child is born into the world*, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, (as Luke i. 14.) and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving; *Praise ye the Lord*. Yet, in this case *rejoice with trembling*; for, though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her, or embittered to her. This therefore may be applied to the gospel-church among the Gentiles, the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, (Isa. liv. 1.) *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear*: (G. il. iv. 27.) for which we (who, being sinners of the Gentiles, are children of the desolate) have reason to say, *Praise ye the Lord*.

PSALM CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt gave birth to their church and nation, which were then founded, then formed; that work of wonder ought therefore to be had in everlasting remembrance. God gloried in it, in the preface to the ten commandments, and Hos. xi. 1. *Out of Egypt have I called my son*. In this psalm, it is celebrated in lively strains of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great Hallelujah, or song of praise, which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover-supper. It must never be forgotten, I. That they were brought out of slavery, v. 1. II. That God set up his tabernacle among them, v. 2. III. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, v. 3, 5. IV. That the earth shook at the giving of the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, v. 4, 6, 7. V. That God gave them water out of the rock, v. 8. In singing this psalm, we must acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits.

1. **W**HEN Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, 2. Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. 3. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back. 4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. 5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? 6. Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? 7. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the

presence of the God of Jacob; 8. Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of; (Judg. vi. 13.) for time, as it does not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy.

Let it never be forgotten,

1. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a *high hand* and a *stretched out arm*. *Israel went out of Egypt*, v. 1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour: they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a *people of a strange language*, lxxxi. 5. The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By this distinction from them, they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

2. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution; (v. 2.) *Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion*. When he delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors, it was that *they might serve him*, both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship, and in obedience to the moral law, in their whole conversation. *Let my people go, that they may serve me*. In order to this, (1.) He set up his *sanctuary* among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them, and promised to receive their homage and tribute. Happy the people that have God's sanctuary among them; (see Exod. xxx. 8. Ezek. xxxvii. 26.) much more they that, like Judah here, are his *sanctuaries*, his living temples, on whom *Holiness to the Lord* is written! (2.) He set up his *dominion* among them, was himself their Lawgiver, and their Judge; and their government was a theocracy; *The Lord was their King*. All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion; those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ has redeemed us, that he might bring us into God's service, and engage us for ever in it.

3. That the Red sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue, and the ruin of their enemies; and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies; (v. 3.) *The sea saw it*, saw there that *Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion*, and therefore fled; for nothing could have been more awful. This was it that *drove Jordan back*, and was an invincible dam to his streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them; they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the word. To illustrate this, the psalmist asks, in a poetical strain, (v. 5.) *What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?* and furnishes the sea with an answer; (v. 7.) it was at the *presence of the Lord*. This is designed to express, (1.) The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was at the *presence of the Lord*, who gave the word. (2.) The mercy of the miracle; *What ailed thee?* Was it in a frolic? Was it only to amuse men? No, it was at the *presence of the God of Jacob*; it was in kindness to the Israel of God, for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus *displeased against the rivers*, and his *wrath was against the sea*, as the prophet speaks, Hab. iii. 8-13. Isa. li. 10.—lxiii.

11, &c. (3.) The wonder and surprise of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with, to serve a turn for God's Israel? Well may the *dukes of Edom be amazed*, and the *mighty men of Moab tremble*, *Exod. xv. 15.* (4.) The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea, and Jordan, as unable to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time is come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back, if it stand in their way. Apply this, [1.] To the planting of the Christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and the powers of darkness, that they trembled and truckled as they did? *Mark i. 34. v. 7.* What ailed the heathen oracles, that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel, that they gave up their cause, to hide their guilty heads, and call to rocks and mountains for shelter? *Rev. vi. 15.* It was at the *presence of the Lord*, and that power which went along with the gospel. [2.] To the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions, that they fly back, that the prejudices are removed, and the whole man become new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit that his imaginations are *cast down*, *2 Cor. x. 5.*

4. That the earth shook and trembled, when God came down on mount Sinai to give the law; (*v. 4.*) *The mountains skipped like rams*, and then the *little hills* might well be excused if they skipped like *lambs*, either when they are frightened, or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters, and made them stand still, shook the stable mountains, and made them tremble; for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are, before God, but like rams and lambs; even the bulkiest and the most rocky are as manageable by him as they are by the shepherd. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills, What ailed them to skip thus? He answers for them, as for the seas, It was at the *presence of the Lord*, before whom, not only these mountains, but the earth itself, may well tremble, (*v. 7.*) since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See *Ps. civ. 32. Isa. lxiv. 3, 4.* He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus, can, when he pleases, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies, and make them tremble.

5. That God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth and all its inhabitants tremble before that God who *turned the rock into a standing water*; (*v. 8.*) and what cannot he do, who did that? The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel, (*Exod. xiv. 22.*) turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel: as they were protected, so they were provided for, by miracles, standing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, and that *Rock was Christ*, *1 Cor. x. 4.* For he is a Fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

PSALM CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is, in the Hebrew, a distinct psalm. In it, we are taught to give glory, 1. To God, and not to

ourselves, *v. 1.* 2. To God, and not to idols, *v. 2. 8.* We must give glory to God, 1. By trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, *v. 9. 15.* 2. By blessing him *v. 16. 18.* Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in, when the enemies were insolent and threatening, in which case the church does not so much pour out her complaint to God, as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such a holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

1. **N**OT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. 2. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? 3. But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased. 4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 6. They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; 7. They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. 8. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self, and the reproaches of idolaters.

1. Boasting is here for ever excluded, *v. 1.* Let no opinion of our own merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory. 1. Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? We must not assume the glory of it to ourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God. We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his mere mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise. Say not, *The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*, *Deut. viii. 17.* Say not, *For my righteousness the Lord has done these great and kind things for me*, *Deut. ix. 4.* No, all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, *Not unto us, O Lord*, and again, *Not unto us, but to thy name*, let all the glory be given; for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy, and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy, and fulfil his promise. All our crowns must be cast at the feet of him that sits upon the throne, for that is the proper place for them. 2. Are we in pursuit of any mercy, and wrestling with God for it? We must take our encouragement, in prayer, from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. "Lord, do so and so for us; not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it." This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest; *Hallowed be thy name*; and, in order to that, *Give us our daily bread*, &c. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them; Whatever becomes of us, unto thy name give glory. See *John xii. 27, 28.*

11. The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced, and justly retorted.

1. The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen; (*v. 2.*) *Wherefore should they say, Where is now their God?* (1.) "Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his

providence, and always nigh to us by his promise and grace?" (2.) "Why does God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low, that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thine own name."

2. He gives a direct answer to their question; (v. 3.) "Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is." (1.) "In the upper world is the presence of his glory; *Our God is in the heavens*, where the gods of the heathen never were; *in the heavens*, and therefore out of sight; but, though his majesty be unapproachable, it does not therefore follow that his being is questionable." (2.) "In the lower world are the products of his power; *He has done whatsoever he pleased*, according to the counsel of his will; he has a sovereign dominion, and a universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, *and not far from any of us*."

3. He returns their question upon themselves. They asked, Where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He does in effect ask, What are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen.

(1.) He shows that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters, at first, worshipped the sun and moon, (Job xxxi. 26.) which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to, (for evil men grow worse and worse,) which was the worshipping of images, v. 4. The matter of them was *silver and gold*, digged out of the earth; (*Man found them poor and dirty in a mine*, Herbert;) proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of men's vain imaginations, and *the works of men's hands*, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands, (as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made *in the image of God*,) it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of men's hands; or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable; *The workman made it, and therefore it is not God*, Hos. viii. 6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing; fitter for a toy-shop than a temple; for children to play with than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with *mouths and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet*, but they could put no life into them, and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcase (for that had life in it once) than a dead image, which neither has life, nor can have. *They speak not*, in answer to those that consult them; the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was *no voice, neither any that answered*. *They see not* the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burthens and wants. *They hear not* their prayers, though ever so loud; *they smell not* their incense, though ever so strong, ever so sweet; *they handle not* the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot *stretch forth their hands to the needy*. *They walk not*, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as *breathe through their throat*; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them, and call a deity into them, as they were before.

(2.) He thence infers the sottishness of their worshippers; (v. 8.) *they that make them images show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but they that make them gods, show their stupidity*

and folly, and *are like unto them*, as senseless blockish things; *they see not* the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; *they hear not* the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, xix. 2, 3. By worshipping these foolish puppets, they make themselves more and more foolish *like them*, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense; and withal they provoke God to *give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment*, Rom. i. 28. *They that trust in them* act very absurdly and very unreasonably; are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves, to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when their gods are gone, Jer. x. 3-11. Isa. xlv. 9, &c.

9. O Israel, trust thou in the LORD; he is their help and their shield. 10. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; he is their help and their shield. 11. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; he is their help and their shield. 12. The LORD hath been mindful of us; he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. 13. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. 14. The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15. You are blessed of the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 16. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17. The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

In these verses,

I. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathen's insulting over us, upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a *Help and a Shield* to those that do *trust in him*; a Help to furnish them with, and forward them in, that which is good, and a Shield to fortify them against, and protect them from, every thing that is evil. Therefore, 1. Let Israel trust in the LORD; the body of the people, as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concern, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best, and will be their *Help and Shield*. 2. Let the priests, the LORD's ministers, and all the families of the house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; (v. 10.) they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies, and therefore of them God takes particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him, in the worst of times. 3. Let the proselytes, who are not of the seed of Israel, but *fear the LORD*, who worship him, and make conscience of their duty to him, let them *trust in him*, for he will not fail nor forsake them, v. 11. Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: they that reverence his word, may rely upon it.

II. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God.

and good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider,

1. What we have experienced; (*vs. 12.*) *The Lord has been mindful of us*, and never unmindful; has been so constantly, has been so remarkably, upon special occasions. He has been mindful of our case, our wants and burthens; mindful of our prayers to him, his promises to us, and the covenant-relation between him and us. All our comforts are derived from God's *thoughts to us-ward*; he *has been mindful of us*, though we have forgotten him. Let *this* engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful.

2. What we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer, *He will bless us*; he that has been our *Help and our Shield*, will be so; he that has *remembered us in our low estate*, will not forget us; but he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable; so that we have reason to hope that he who has delivered, and does, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all; *he will bless us*; he has promised that he will; he has pronounced a blessing upon all his people. God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised that *he will bless the house of Israel*; he will bless the commonwealth, will bless his people in their civil interests; *he will bless the house of Aaron*, the church, the ministry; will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people, it was their office; (*Numb. vi. 23.*) but God blessed them, and so blessed their blessings. Nay, (*v. 13.*) *he will bless them that fear the Lord*, though they be not of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth, before Peter perceived it, *That, in every nation, he that fears God is accepted of him*, and blessed, *Acts x. 34, 35.* *He will bless them, both small and great*, both young and old; God has blessings in store for them that are good betimes, and for them that are old disciples; both those that are poor in the world, and those that make a figure. The greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock.

It is promised, (*v. 14.*) *The Lord shall increase you*. Whom God blesses he increases; that was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings, *Be fruitful, and multiply*. God's blessing gives an increase; increase in number, building up the family; increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour; especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increasings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness, and joy; those are blessed indeed, whom God thus increases, who are made wiser and better, and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be, (1.) A constant continual increase; "*He shall increase you more and more*; so that, as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light," *Prov. iv. 18.* (2.) An hereditary increase; "*You and your children; you in your children.*" It is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God, even in their infancy. For, (*v. 15.*) *You are blessed of the Lord, you and your children are so; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed*, *Isa. lix. 9.* They that are the blessed of the Lord have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord, as their *Help and Shield*, for it is he that *made heaven and earth*; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any

thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he has all things at command for us, if we fear him and trust in him. He that *made heaven and earth*, can doubtless make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

III. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist's example, who concludes this psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

1. God is to be praised; (*v. 16.*) He is greatly to be praised; for, (1.) His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he has prepared in the heavens; *The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's*; he is the rightful Owner of all the treasures of light and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. (2.) His goodness is large, for *the earth he has given to the children of men*, having designed it, when he made it, for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is Proprietor in chief; *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services: for though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to render an account how they use it. Calvin complains that profane wicked people, in his days, perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing, in banter, that God, having given the earth to the children of men, will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make the best of it as their portion; it is as it were thrown like a prey among them, Let him seize it that can. It is pity that such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as arises from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused. From the highest heavens, it is certain God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given.

2. The dead are not capable of praising him, (*v. 17.*) nor any that go into silence. The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body, and is capable of praising God; and *the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthens of the flesh*, do praise God, are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant business; but the dead body cannot praise God; death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God, for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies. "Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols." *The dead praise not the Lord*, so as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life. See *Ps. xxx. 9.—lxxxviii. 10.*

3. Therefore it concerns us to praise him; (*v. 18.*) *But we*, we that are alive, *will bless the Lord*; we and those that shall come after us will do it, *from this time forth and for evermore*, to the end of time; we and those we shall remove to, *from this time forth*, and to eternity. *The dead praise not the Lord*, therefore we will do it the more diligently. (1.) Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. *Moses my servant is dead, now therefore, Joshua, arise.* (2.) We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence; *but while we do live, we will bless the Lord*, will improve our time, and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him, before the night comes,

and because *the night comes wherein no man can work*. The Lord will bless us; (v. 12.) he will do well for us, and therefore *we will bless him*, we will speak well of him. Poor returns for such receivings! Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it; *Praise the Lord*; praise him with us, praise him in your places, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised *for evermore*. *Hallelujah*.

PSALM CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion, or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles and seven, which deliverances draw from him many very lively expressions of devotion, love, and gratitude; with the like pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God, in singing it. Observe, I. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, v. 3, 10, 11. II. The application he made to God, in that distress, v. 4. III. The experience he had of God's goodness to him, in answer to prayer; God heard him, (v. 1, 2.) pitied him, (v. 5, 6.) delivered him, v. 8. IV. His care respecting the acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, v. 12. 1. He will love God, v. 1. 2. He will continue to call upon him, v. 2, 13, 17. 3. He will rest in him, v. 7. 4. He will walk before him, v. 9. 5. He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly, v. 13, 15, 17, 19. *Lastly*, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, v. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

1. **I LOVE the LORD**, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications. 2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5. Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful. 6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt beautifully with thee. 8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling. 9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm, we have,

I. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions, (v. 1, 2.) which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.

1. He had experienced God's goodness to him, in answer to prayer; *He has heard my voice and my supplications*. David, in straits, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his cause, and granted him an answer of peace. *He has inclined his ear to me*; this intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in *groanings that cannot be uttered*. He *hearkens and hears*, Jer. viii. 6. Yet it implies, also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him!

2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God, and to his honour.

(1.) He will love God the better. He begins the

psalm somewhat abruptly, with a profession of that which his heart was full of; *I love the Lord*; (as xviii. 1.) and fitly does he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment, and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. "I love him only, and nothing beside him, but what I love for him. God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him.

(2.) He will love prayer the better; *Therefore I will call upon him*. The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our praying infirmities, and therefore why may we not? God answers prayer, to make us love it, and expects this from us, in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field, when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, *I will call upon him as long as I live*; Hebrew, *In my days*; every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living, we must continue praying: this breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

II. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him, and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God, in his dealings with him, showed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record; (v. 5.) "*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous*. He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me." Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No, *our God is merciful*, merciful to us; and *it is of his mercies that we are not consumed*. Review David's experiences.

(1.) He was in great distress and trouble; (v. 3.) *the sorrows of death compassed me*; that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death; perhaps the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, is called here *the pains of hell*; terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us *therefore* give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These *compassed* him on every side, they arrested him, *gat hold upon him*, so that he could not escape; *without were fightings, within were fears*. "*I found trouble and sorrow*; not only they found me, but I found them." Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion; this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes our condition bad, let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

(2.) In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, v. 4. He tells us that he prayed; *Then called I upon the name of the Lord*: then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose; "*O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul*; save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul." Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, *O Lord, I beseech thee*; when we come to the throne of grace, we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words, (v. 5.) *Gracious is the Lord*, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request and encourage his faith and hope; "*Lord, deliver my soul*, for thou art *gracious*

and merciful, and that only I depend upon for relief."

(3) God, in answer to this prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion *preserves the simple*, v. 6. *Because* they are simple, sincere, and upright, and without guile, therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world, *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity*. Though they are simple, weak, and helpless, who cannot shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design, yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him, and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those who by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

Let David speak his own experience.

[1.] God supported him under his troubles; "*I was brought low*, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then *he helped me*; helped me both to bear the worst, and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved; the poor man who *cried*, and the Lord *heard him*," xxxiv. 6. Note, God's people are never brought so low, but that everlasting arms are under them, and they cannot sink who are sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooses to help, Deut. xxxii. 36.

[2.] God saved him out of his troubles; (v. 8.) *Thou hast delivered*; which means either the preventing of the distress he was ready to fall into, or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, *First*, His soul from death. Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive; and the mercy is the more sensible, if we have been at death's door, and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return; that a life so often forfeited, and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. *Secondly*, His eyes from tears; that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causes grief, or, however, from being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looses the mourner's sackcloth, and girds them with gladness, then he delivers *their eyes from tears*, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall *wipe away all tears from our eyes*. *Thirdly*, His feet from falling, from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God *hold us by the right hand*, (lxxii. 2, 23.) so that, though we enter into temptation, we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, "*Thou hast delivered my feet from falling into the grave, when I had one foot there already*."

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, showed himself a good man. God had done all this for him; and therefore,

(1.) He will live a life of delight in God; (v. 7.) *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, [1.] "*Repose thyself and be easy, and do not agitate thyself so with distrustful disquieting fears, as thou hast sometimes done*. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself; God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee." [2.] "*Repose thyself in God*. Return to him as thy Rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature, which is to be had in him only." God is the soul's Rest; in him only it can dwell at ease; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He has *dealt bountifully with us*; he has provided sufficiently for

our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it, at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the *weary and heavy-laden*, Matth. xi. 28. Return to thy Noah; his name signifies *rest*, as the dove, when she found no rest, returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night, when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, *Return to thy Rest, O my soul*.

(2.) He will live a life of devotedness to God; (v. 9.) *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*, that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note, [1.] It is our great duty to *walk before the Lord*, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence, and under his eye; to approve ourselves to him, as a holy God, by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will, and, as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. *I am the Almighty God, walk before me*, Gen. xvii. 1. *We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing*. [2.] The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living, by the power, and patience, and tender mercy, of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The *land of the living* is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the *land of the living*, (Ezek. xxvi. 20.) and they whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision, are in a special manner concerned to *set the Lord always before them*. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. 11. I said in my haste, All men are liars. 12. What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? 13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. 14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 15. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. 16. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 19. In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the *Martyr's psalm*, I suppose for the sake of v. 15.

Three things here David makes confession of:

1. His faith; (v. 10.) *I believed, therefore have I spoken*. Which is quoted by the apostle, (2 Cor. iv. 13.) with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David *believed* the being, providence, and promise, of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel, that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through, in the be

lie of this, and therefore *he spake*, spake to God by prayer, (v. 4.) by praise, v. 12. Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He *spake to himself*; because he believed, he said to his soul, *Return to thy Rest*. He spake to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him, and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, They that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, Rom. x. 10. Acts ix. 19, 20. They that live in hope of the kingdom of glory must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, Matth. x. 22.

II. His fear; (v. 11.) *I was greatly afflicted*, and then *I said in my haste*, (somewhat rashly and inconsiderately, in my amazement, so some; when I was in consternation; in my flight, so others; when Saul was in pursuit of me,) *All men are liars*; all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers; his friends, who, he thought, would have stood by him, deserted him and disowned him, when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, says he, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, 2 Sam. xxvii. 1. Observe, 1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David believed, and *spake well*, (v. 10.) but now, through unbelief, he spake amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, xxxix. 1-3. 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man, who *sits in the seat of the scornful*; (Ps. i. 1.) sits, and *speaks against his brother*, l. 19, 20. 4. What we speak amiss in haste, we must by repentance unsay again, (as David, xxxix. 22.) and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no rash word of David's. He was *greatly afflicted*, and forced to *fly*, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. "No," he said, "*all men are liars*;" as men of low degree are vanity, so men of high degree are a lie, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed." In this sense the apostle seems to make it; (Rom. iii. 4.) *Let God be true, and every man a liar*, in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from men, and cleave to God.

III. His gratitude, v. 12, &c. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and, in consideration hereof,

1. He inquires what returns he shall make; (v. 12.) *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?* Here he speaks, (1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God; *all his benefits*. This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit, (v. 6, 7.) but in that one he saw many, and that one brought many to mind; and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits toward him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies, we should magnify them, and speak highly of them. (2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude, *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration, for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompense to God, than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable,

something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgement of a grateful mind. He asks God, *What shall I render?* Asks the priests, asks his friends, or rather, asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to inquire, *What we shall render?*

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

(1.) He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, v. 13, 17.

[1.] "*I will take the cup of salvation*; I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me;" this is called *the cup of deliverance*, because drunk in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a *cup of blessing*, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. *I will receive, First, The cup of affliction*. Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a *cup of salvation*, Phil. i. 19. *This shall turn to my salvation*; it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a *cup of salvation*. "God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands, I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will." Herein David spake the language of the Son of David; (John xviii. 11.) *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it, and drink it?* Secondly, *The cup of consolation*; "I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this."

[2.] *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving*; the thank-offerings which God required, Lev. vii. 11, 12, &c. Note, These whose hearts are truly thankful, will express it in thank-offerings. We must first *give our ourselves* to God, as *living sacrifices*, (Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. viii. 5.) and then lay out of what we have, for his honour, in works of piety and charity; *doing good and communicating* are sacrifices with which *God is well-pleased*, (Heb. xiii. 15, 16.) and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do, in return, is, to be bountiful to the poor, Ps. xvi. 2, 3. Why should we offer that to God which cost us nothing?

[3.] *I will call upon the name of the Lord*. This he had promised, (v. 2.) and here he repeats it, (v. 13.) and again, v. 17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him that we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore, in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek him for further mercies, and continue to call upon him.

(2.) He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people; (v. 15.) *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*; so precious, that he will not gratify Saul, or Absalom, or any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with, in the depth of his distress and danger; the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it, who might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; that have received mercy from him, and show mercy for his sake.

The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord*; their life is so, (2 Kings i. 13.) their blood is so, Ps. lxxii. 14. God often wonderfully prevents the death of his saints, where there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best, in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dear for it, when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, Matth. xxiii. 35. Though *no man lays it to heart*, when the *righteous perish*, God will make it to appear that he *lays it to heart*. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

(3.) He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, *What shall I render?* Here he surrenders himself, which was *more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice*; (v. 16.) *O Lord, truly I am thy servant*. Here is, [1.] The relation in which David professes to stand to God; *"I am thy servant; I choose to be so, I resolve to be so, I will live and die in thy service."* He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints*; but, when he comes to apply it to himself, he does not say, *Truly I am thy saint*; (that looked too high a title for himself); but, *I am thy servant*. David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David does not here compliment with God, as it is common among men to say, *I am your servant*, Sir; No, Lord, *I am truly thy servant, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so*. And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of, and which he was resolved to abide by; *"I am thy servant, I am thy servant"*. Let others serve what master they will, *truly I am thy servant*. [2.] The ground of that relation: two ways men came to be servants, *First*, By birth; *"Lord, I was born in thy house, I am the son of thine handmaid, and therefore thine"*. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty, and is pleasurable with God for mercy. *Secondly*, By redemption. He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. *"Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds, these sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work."* *The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee*. Patrick.

(4.) He will make conscience of paying his vows, and making good what he had promised; not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction; (v. 14.) *I will pay my vows*; and again, (v. 18.) *now in the presence of all his people*. Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not vow, than vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, [1.] *Presently*; he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day; but, *"I will pay them now"*, Eccl. v. 4. [2.] *Publicly*; he will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God, he will do it in the *presence of all his people*; not for ostentation, but to show that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows, in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a cloud of Israelites attending, *in the midst of*

Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

PSALM CXVII.

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so often as we do, is, for the shortness of it; but, if we rightly understood and considered it, we should sing it oftener for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, I. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, v. 1. II. Proper matter for that praise suggested, v. 2. We are soon weary indeed of well doing, if, in singing this psalm, we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning.

1. **PRAISE THE LORD**, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. 2. For his merciful kindness is great toward us and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever Praise ye the LORD.

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it, (Rcm. xv. 11.) where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them, when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people*. Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses, to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people; by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

1. The vast extent of the gospel-church, v. 1. For many ages, in Judah only was God known, and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations *praised gods of wood and stone*, (Dan. v. 4.) while there was no devotion at all paid, at least, none openly that we know of, to the living and true God. But here *all nations* are called upon to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood; and because, unless the people of the land became Jews, and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were *afar off* are *made nigh*. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 3, 6. Observe here,

(1.) Who should be admitted into the church; *all nations, and all people*. The original words are the same that are used for the *heathen* that rage, and the *people* that imagine against Christ; (ii. 1.) they that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, Matth. xxiv. 14. Mark xvi. 15. *All nations* shall be called, and to *some* of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be disciples.

(2.) How their admission into the church is foretold; by a repeated call to *praise him*. The tidings of the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God; and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly

favoured whom God invites by his word, and inclines by his Spirit, to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a *name* and a praise. See Jer. xiii. 11.

2. The unsearchable riches of *gospel-grace*, which are to be the matter of our praise, v. 2. In the gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most bright in themselves, and most comfortably to us: and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God, (Rom. xv. 8, 9.) for *the truth of God*, and for *his mercy*. We, that enjoy the gospel, have reason to *praise the Lord*, (1.) For the power of his mercy; *His merciful kindness is great toward us: it is strong*, so the word signifies; it is *mighty* for the pardon of mighty sins, (Amos v. 12.) and for the working out of a mighty salvation. (2.) For the perpetuity of his truth; *The truth of the Lord endures for ever*. It was mercy, mere mercy to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them; it was merciful kindness prevailing toward them above their deserts; and in it the *truth of the Lord*, of his promise made unto the fathers, *endures for ever*; for though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts, and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must *praise the Lord*.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he had, after many a storm, weathered his point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical: to him, it is certain, the prophet here bears witness, in the latter part of the psalm: Christ himself applies it to himself, (*Matth. xxi. 42.*) and the former part of the psalm may, fairly, and without forcing, be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterward sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it, I. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, v. 1.-4. II. He encourages himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and joy in the great and kind things he had done for him, v. 5.-18. III. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, v. 19.-23. IV. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself, triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, v. 24.-29. In singing this psalm, we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

1. **G**IVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*; because his mercy *endureth* for ever. 2. Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever. 4. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever. 5. I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place. 6. The LORD *is on my side*; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7. The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me. 8. *It is better* to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man: 9. *It is better* to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13. Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. 14. The LORD *is my strength and song*, and is become my salvation. 15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is in the tabernacles of the righteous*: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. 16. The right hand of the LORD *is exalted*; the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. 17. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness, the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

I. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it; (v. 1.) *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endures for ever*, not only in the everlasting Fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen *vessels of mercy*, who will be everlasting monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that *fear God*, were called upon to *trust in God*; (cxv. 9.-11.) here they are called upon to confess that *his mercy endures for ever*, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him: (v. 2.-4.) priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song; if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that *his mercy endures for ever*, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly *fear the Lord*, shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron.

II. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise, and supports of faith, and both ways God would have glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness.

Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon, for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions; but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was *in distress*, (v. 5.) greatly straitened and at a loss: there were many that *hated him*; (v. 7.) and that could not but be a grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strove to gain the good affections of all. *All nations compassed me about*, v. 10. All the nations adjacent to

Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he was newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. We read of *his enemies round about*; they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated; (v. 11.) *They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about*, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and for a time, prevalent, in their attempts against him, and that, when put into disorder, they rallied again, and pushed on their design. *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loses her life with her sting, *Animamque in vulnere ponit—She lays down her life in the wound. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!*

Two ways David was brought into trouble; (1.) By the injuries that men did him; (v. 13.) *Thou (O enemy) hast thrust sore at me*, with many a desperate push, that *I might fall into sin and into ruin. Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me*, (so the word is,) so that *I was ready to fall*. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sore at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God, and from our comfort in him; and, if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts had been fatal to us. (2.) By the afflictions which God laid upon him; (v. 18.) *The Lord has chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a Father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the Author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he *might partake of his holiness*; (Heb. xii. 10, 11.) howbeit, men, who were the instruments of it, meant not so, *neither did their hearts think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy*, Isa. x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief, God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand. God will sanctify the trouble to his people, as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs; and he will guard them against the troubles, as it is the enemies' thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus; many there were that *hated him*, hated him without a cause; they *compassed him about*, Jews and Romans surrounded him; *they thrust sore at him*; the Devil did so when he tempted him, his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sore, bruised him, and put him to grief, that *by his stripes we might be healed*.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. (1.) God heard his prayer; (v. 5.) "*He answered me with enlargements, he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer, and yet gave more largely than I desired.*" *He answered me, and set me in a large place*, (so we read it,) where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive; and the *large place* was the more comfortable, because he was brought to it *out of distress*, iv. 1. (2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him; They are *quenched as the fire of thorns*, (v. 12.) which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened: such was the fury of David's enemies; such is the *laughter of the fool*, like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, (Ecc. vii. 6.) and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, any more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sore at him, but the Lord

helped him, (v. 13.) helped him to keep his feet, and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long before this been our ruin, if God had not been our Helper. (3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death; (v. 18.) "*He hath chastened me, but he has not given me over unto death, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies.*" To this St. Paul seems to refer, (2 Cor. vi. 9.) *As dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sore, immediately to despair of life, for God sometimes, in appearance, *turns men to destruction, and yet saith, Return; saith unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ; God *answered him, and set him in a large place*, quenched the fire of his enemies' rage, which did but consume themselves, *for through death he destroyed him that had the power of death*; he helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not *give him over unto death*, that he did not *leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him*.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God: from his own experience he can say, *It is better, more wise, more comfortable, and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*, yea, though it be in *princes*, v. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him easy, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

[1.] He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him; (v. 6.) "*The Lord is on my side*. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouses my righteous cause, and will plead it." If we are on God's side, he is on ours; if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us; (v. 7.) "*The Lord takes my part, and stands up for me, with them that help me*. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them; he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself, nor could any friend I have in the world help me." Thus, (v. 14.) "*The Lord is my Strength, and my Song; I make him so; without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my Strength, both for doing and suffering; and in him I solace myself as my Song, by which I both express my joy, and ease my grief; and, making him so, I find him so: he strengthens my heart with his graces, and rejoices my heart with his comforts.*" If God be our Strength, he must be our Song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the Strength of his people, when he is not their Song; they have spiritual supports, when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our Strength and our Song, he is become not only our Saviour, but our Salvation; for his being our Strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our Song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

[2.] He triumphs over his enemies; now shall his head be lifted up above them; for,

First, He is sure they cannot hurt him; "God is for me, and then *I will not fear what man can do against me*," v. 6. He can set them all at defiance, and is not disturbed at any of their attempts. "They can do nothing to me, but what God permits them to do; they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God, they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depend

ing creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him." *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Isa. li. 12. The apostle quotes this, with application to all Christians; (Heb. xiii. 6.) they may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me;* let him do his worst.

Secondly, He is sure that he shall be too hard for them at last; "*I shall see my desire upon them that hate me;*" (v. 7.) I shall see them defeated in their designs against me; nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them;* (v. 10-12.) I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them; and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself, or taking vengeance for myself." Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel,* 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David says this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly.

[3.] He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life.

First, Of his comfort; (v. 15.) *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous,* and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and moveable; here we have no city, *no continuing city.* But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnestness of eternal salvation, which *is come to this house,* Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation, there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called *the joy of salvation,* for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing, there ought to be *the voice of rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving.* Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others.

Secondly, Of his victory; *The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly,* (v. 15.) *and is exalted;* for (as some read it) *it has exalted me.* The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victoriously. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, Isa. lxiii. 5, 6. There is spirit, as well as strength, in all God's operations for his people. And when God's right hand doeth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises.

Thirdly, Of his life; (v. 17.) "*I shall not die by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, but live, and declare the works of the Lord;*" I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation." Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David, in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the *good pleasure of the Lord* should prosper in his hand.

19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go in to them, and I will praise the LORD; 20. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art be-

come my salvation. 22. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23. This is the LORD's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes. 24. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. 25. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27. God is the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief priests and scribes; and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, Acts iv. 11. Now observe here,

1. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, v. 19-21. 1. The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him *that cometh in the name of the Lord; Open to me the gates of righteousness.* So the temple-gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh; as the sacrifices there offered are called *sacrifices of righteousness.* These that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances, must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must *go into them,* must enter into the holiest, as far as we have leave, and *praise the Lord.* Our business within God's gates, is, to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. 2. He sees admission granted him; (v. 20.) *This is the gate of the Lord,* the gate of his appointing, *into which the righteous shall enter;* as if he had said, "The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome, *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted; he is *the Way;* there is no coming to the Father but by him; (John xiv. 6.) he is the *Door of the sheep;* (John x. 9.) he is the Gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and *come into God's righteousness,* as the expression is, lxix. 27. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery, that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. 3. He promises to give thanks to God for this favour; (v. 21.) *I will praise thee.* They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their Salvation.

II. The prophecy itself, v. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preference; he was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the head-stone of the building; but its principal reference is to Christ: and here we have,

1. His humiliation; he is the *Stone which the builders refused;* he is the *Stone cut out of the mount.*

tain without hands, Dan. ii. 34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a *precious Stone*; (1 Pet. ii. 6.) for the foundation of the gospel-church must be *sapphires*, Isa. liv. 2. This Stone was *rejected by the builders*, by the rulers and people of the Jews; (Acts iv. 8, 10, 11.) they refused to own him as the Stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they *denied him in the presence of Pilate*, (Acts iii. 13.) when they said, *We have no king but Cæsar*. They trampled upon this Stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation; he is *become the Head-stone of the corner*; he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief Corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief Top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the *Author and Finisher of our faith*. Thus highly has God exalted him, *because he humbled himself*; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the Foundation of our hope, the Centre of our unity, and the End of our living. *To me to live is Christ*.

3. The hand of God in all this; *This is the Lord's doing*, it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel, it is his contrivance; both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, Acts ii. 23.—iv. 27, 28. He sent him, sealed him, his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be *marvellous in our eyes*. Christ's name is *Wonderful*; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness*.

III. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy; (v. 24.) *This is the day the Lord has made*. The whole time of the gospel-dispensation, that *accepted time*, that *day of salvation*, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected Stone began to be exalted; and so, (1.) Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath; *It is the day which the Lord has made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it firm: it is therefore called *the Lord's day*, for it bears his image and superscription. (2.) The duty of the sabbath; the work of the day, that it is to be done in his day; *We will rejoice and be glad in it*; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the *Head of the corner*. This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

2. Let the exalted Redeemer be met, and attended, with joyful hosannas, v. 25, 26.

(1.) Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy; *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord*. This is like *Vivat Rex—Long live the King*, and speaks a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. *Hosanna* signifies, *Save now, I beseech thee*. [1.] "Lord, save me, I beseech thee, let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my Ruler; let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, lxxii. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering, and to conquer." [2.] "Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done;" thus let prayer be made for him continually, lxxii. 15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the Devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well-wishers, (Matth. xxi. 9.) *Hosanna to the Son of David; long live King Jesus; let him reign for ever*.

(2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, v. 26. [1.] Let them bless the prince with their praises; *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Jesus Christ: is he that cometh; *Immanuel*, he that was to come, and is yet to come again, Rev. i. 8. *He comes in the name of the Lord*, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will, and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*; we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, xlv. 2. We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thine own." We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, Isa. lii. 7. John xiii. 26. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who has said, *Surely I come quickly, would even so come*. [2.] Let them bless the people with their prayers; *We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord*. Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed, to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. We assure you that, in and through Jesus Christ, you are blessed; for he came to bless you; "You are *blessed out of the house of the Lord with spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, (Eph. i. 3.) and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you."

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, v. 27. Here is, (1.) The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ: *God is the Lord which has showed us light*; God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he has promised, and perfecting what he has begun, Exod. vi. 3. *He has showed us light*, he has given us the knowledge of

himself and his will: *he has shined upon us*, so some; has favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. *The day which the Lord has made* brings light with it, true light. (2.) The duty which this privilege calls for: *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here: the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is, ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but *living sacrifices*, (Rom. xii. 1.) to be bound to the altar: spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, v. 28, 29. (1.) He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart, and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant relation to him, and interest in him: *"Thou art my God, on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me, and art owned by me; and therefore I will praise thee."* (2.) He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord; in him it is that God is good to man, and that *his mercy endures for ever*; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it; (v. 1.) for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption. *Glory to God in the highest*, (Luke ii. 14.) for there is *on earth peace*, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, Luke xix. 38. *Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore Glory in the highest.*

PSALM CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest, it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence; which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and toward the latter end of his time, gathered out of his day-book, where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn, by the psalmist's example, to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion, but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting, and for the expressing, of our devout affections; what some have said of this psalm is true, *He that shall read it considerably, it will either warm him or shame him.*

I. The composition of it is singular, and very exact. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw, throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson says, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it, than we at this

distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints' alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories, as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our A B C. Perhaps the psalmist found it of use to himself to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, until he might fill up the quota of every part; and the better he was to begin with might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence, and add little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them, both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the better the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse; thus young people would the more easily learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despises their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile.

II. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government, of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it; for which he praises God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and govern him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, (such that which terms us what God expects from us, and that which tells what we may expect from him, and of the system of religion which is founded upon it, and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. *God's law*, because they are enacted by him, as our Sovereign. 2. *His law*, because they are the rule and order of his providence and of our conduct. 3. *His testimonies*, because they are solemnly declared to be true, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. *His precepts*, because given with authority, and as it were, solemnly lodged with us as a trust. 5. *His statutes*, as those prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. *His commandments*, or sayings, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ, the essential Eternal Word, is made manifest. 7. *His judgments*, because framed in divine wisdom, and because by them we must be judged. 8. *His righteousness*, because it is the rule, just and good, and the rule and standard of his holiness. 9. *His statutes*, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. *His law*, as the law is said, because the principles upon which the divine law is built are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse, (it is v. 122,) in all this long psalm, in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence, or David's practice, as v. 75, 84, 121; and v. 132, they are called *God's name*. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God, is the more admirable, considering how little he had of it, in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps, in writing, than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day; which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul; so copious, so various, is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our Ruler and great Benefactor; that in which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another; (so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life;) and that in which we are to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another; so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every Christian. Is any afflicted? Is any merry? Each will find that here which is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that, if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone, and when others join with us; for, ordinarily, the affections, especially of weaker Christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

1. ALEPH.

BLESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shows that godly people are happy people: they are, and shall be, blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he does not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and *that* we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessednesses.

Now observe the characters of the happy people. They are happy,

1. Who make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves, in their whole conversation, by that rule; they *walk in the law of the Lord*, v. 1. God's word is a law to them, not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversation; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through, by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but *press forward* in them *toward the mark*, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is *walking in God's ways*, (v. 3.) the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our discourse, but we must make it the rule of our walk; we must walk *in his ways*, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job xxiii. 10, 11.—xxxii. 7.

2. Who are upright and honest in their religion; *Undefiled in the way*; not only who keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, *unspotted from the world*, but who are habitually sincere in their intentions; *in whose spirit there is no guile*; who are really as good as they seem to be, and row the same way as they look.

3. Who are true to the trust reposed in them, as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews, that to them were committed the oracles of God; and blessed are they who preserve pure and entire that sacred deposit; *who keep his testimonies* as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those who shall come after them in this world. They who would *walk in the law of the Lord must keep his testimonies*, his truths: those will not long make conscience of good practices, who do not adhere to good principles. Or, *his testimonies* may denote his covenant; the ark of the covenant is called *the ark of the testimony*; those do not keep covenant with God who do not keep the commandments of God.

4. Who have a single eye to God as their chief Good and highest End in all they do in religion; (v. 2.) *They seek him with their whole heart*. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only; this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be, the Rewarder, the Reward, of all those who thus *seek him diligently, seek him with the heart*; for that is it that God looks at and requires; and *with the whole heart*; for if the heart be divided between him and the world, it is faulty.

5. Who carefully avoid all sin; (v. 3.) *They do no iniquity*; they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do who are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it; they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to *have always consciences void of offence*.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no, that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is. He taught our first parents to question the command; *Hath God said, ye shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this; (v. 4.) *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts*, to make religion our rule; and *to keep them diligently*, to make religion our business, and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so; (v. 5.) *O that my ways were directed* accordingly; not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not in any thing to be a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather, in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God, that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments: not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God; "Thou wouldest have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them." *This is the will of God, even our sanctification*; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty, with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, v. 6. Note, (1.) It is the undoubted character of every good man, that he has a *respect to all God's commandments*. He has a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he does in religion, he does with a conscientious regard to the command, because it is his duty. He has *respect to all the commandments*, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority, (Jam. ii. 10, 11.) and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those who have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man, both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins, and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. (2.) Those who have a sincere *respect to all God's commandments, shall not be ashamed*; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have *confidence toward God*, and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, 1 John iii. 21. They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls, they shall

nor be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself; they that are upright may take the comfort of their uprightness; "As, if I be wicked, woe to me; so, if I be sincere, it is well with me."

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is,

1. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to learn God's *righteous judgments*; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward, and desired to know more, as knowing this, that *he had not yet attained*; but, as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live, we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures*.

2. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, (1.) That he might give God the glory of his learning; *I will praise thee, when I have learned thy judgments*; intimating, that he could not learn, unless God taught him; and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free school, and teaches without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit; surely it is a mercy worth thanks, to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. Those have learned a good lesson who have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery who have learned to *praise him with uprightness of heart*, are inward with him in praising him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. (2.) That he might himself come under the government of that learning; *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes*. We cannot keep them, unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain, if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who are come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

3. His prayer to God, not to leave him; "*O forsake me not*; leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then *I shall not keep thy statutes*." Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them; for then the tempter will be too hard for them. "Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost, for a time, withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly*; for woe unto me, if God departs from me."

2. BETH.

9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked; By what means may the next generation be made better than this? *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his*

way? Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Beside the original corruption we all brought into the world with us, (from which we are not cleansed unto this day,) there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way; *youthful lusts*; (2 Tim. ii. 22.) these render their way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way—to get their hearts renewed, and their lives reformed; to make clean, and keep clean, from the *corruption that is in the world through lust*, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves inquire by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually *cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to the word of God*; and it is the honour of the word of God, that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons, and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. (1.) Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it: that will do more toward the cleansing of young men, than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. (2.) They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large, or by no rule at all, or choosing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture rules; so their way shall be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God; "*I have sought thee, sought to thee as my Oracle, sought after thee as my Happiness, sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek unto their God?*" If I have not yet found thee, *I have sought thee*, and thou never saidst, *Seek, in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart*; sought thee only, sought thee diligently."

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work; "Thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to *wander from them*." The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; *he hid it in his heart*, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it: he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a warm regard for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and

hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it; *that I might not sin against thee*. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent it, is, to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with, *It is written*; may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

12. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God; "*Blessed art thou, O Lord*. Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me, therefore, and then accept me." In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

2. He asks grace from God; "*Teach me thy statutes*; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the Fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that Fountain, this blessing from that Blessedness; *Teach me thy statutes*, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee."

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him;

(1.) That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God; (v. 13.) *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth*. This he did, not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment, according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he showed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride* he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store, things new and old. They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life, should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, (v. 12.) that God would teach him; and here he pleads, "Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it;" for to him that has shall be given.

(2.) That he had entertained himself with it; "*Lord, teach me thy statutes*; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them, v. 14. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments*, in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches*; as much as ever any worldlying rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say,

Soul, take thine ease." In true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he does, that he will do, 2 Cor. xi. 12. They that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

(1.) He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts; (v. 15.) *I will meditate in thy precepts*. He not only discoursed of them to others, (many do that only to show their knowledge and authority,) but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

(2.) He will have them always in his eye; *I will have respect unto thy ways*, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purposes, unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

(3.) He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoices in this light, but *I will still, I will for ever, delight myself in thy statutes*; not only think of them, but do them with delight, v. 16. David took more delight in God's statutes than in the pleasures of his court, or the honours of his camp; more than in his sword or in his harp: when the law is written in the heart, duty becomes a delight.

(4.) He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; "*I will not forget thy word*; not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it, when I have occasion to use it." They that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. GIMEL.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with me, that I may live*. It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if withheld, we die; or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered, and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye; "*Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry*; but *that I may live and keep thy word*, may observe it myself, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which, the longer I live, the better I shall do."

18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Observe here,

1. That there are wondrous things in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to behold; not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and

* The use of the term *pride*, in a favourable sense, has already been pointed out as an inadvertency.—ED.

things which were long *hid from the wise and prudent*, but are now *revealed unto babes*. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is *Wonderful*. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to *look into them*, 1 Pet. i. 12.

2. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel, must beg of him to *open their eyes*, and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, *Let there be light*, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that they who at first *saw men as trees walking*, may come to *see all things clearly*; and the more God opens our eyes, the more wonders we see in the word of God which we saw not before.

19. *I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.*

Here we have,

1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition; *I am a stranger in the earth*. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a *stranger*. We are all strangers on earth, and must so account ourselves.

2. The request he makes to God thereupon; *Hide not thy commandments from me*; he means more; "Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. *I am a stranger*, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger* here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence."

20. *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*

David had prayed that God would open his eyes, (v. 18.) and open the law; (v. 19.) now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

1. His desire was importunate; *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments*; or, as some read it, "*It is taken up, and wholly employed, in longing for thy judgments*"; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone, if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort, of it."

2. It was constant; *at all times*; it was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God, as its necessary food, which there is no living without.

21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

Here is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad; they are proud, they magnify themselves above others; and yet that is not all; they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition

with, and opposition to, the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin, and the tenor of their laws is no better; *They do err from thy commandments*, as Israel, that did *always err in their hearts*; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* As Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord?*

2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for God *resists the proud*; and they that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse; (Gal. iii. 10.) and he that now *beholds them afar off*, will shortly say to them, *Go, ye cursed*. The proud sinners bless themselves, God curses them; and though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them: and these rebukes are earnest of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God, and pray the more earnestly that he might not *err from God's commandments*. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be *removed*, or, as the word is, *rolled, from off him*. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despised him, and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him, and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well, to be ill-spoken of. It intimates that they lay heavy upon him. Hard and foul words do not indeed break bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, "Lord, *remove* them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty, or discouraged in it." God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust; to him we may appeal as the Assessor of right and Avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise, that he will clear up our *righteousness as the light*, xxxvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good, and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God; *For I have kept thy testimonies*. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, (1.) That he was jeered for well-doing; he was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion: so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly. (2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing; "Lord, remove it from me, *for I have kept thy testimonies* notwithstanding." If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.*

See here, 1. How David was abused even of great men, who should have known better his cha-

racter and his case, and have been more generous; *Princes did sit*, sit in counsel, sit in judgment, and *spoke against me*. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood, when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses; he *meditated in God's statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not: when they spake against him, he found that in the word of God which spake for him, and spake comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. They that have pleasure in communion with God, may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24. Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.

Here David expresses his meditating in God's statutes, (v. 23.) which was of such use to him when princes sat and spake against him.

1. Did the affliction make him sad? The word of God comforted him, and was *his delight*, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul then when other comforts are imbibed.

2. Did it perplex him? Was he at a loss what to do when the princes spake against him? God's statutes were *his counsellors*, and they counselled him to bear it patiently, and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors, both to princes and private persons; *They are the men of my counsel*; so the word is. There will be found more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must take them for their counsellors, and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

4. DALETH.

25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. David's complaint. We should have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he says himself, *My soul not only rolls in the dust, but cleaves to the dust*; which is a complaint, either, (1.) Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body, (both which are dust,) and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties; when he would do good, evil was present with him. God intimated that Adam was not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, *Dust thou art*, Gen. iii. 19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's, of a body of death that he carried about with him. The remainders of in-dwelling corruption are a very grievous burthen to a gracious soul. Or, (2.) Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble; *without were fightings, within were fears*, and both together brought him even to the dust of death, (xxii. 15.) and his soul clave inseparably to it.

2. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition; "*Quicken thou me according to thy word*. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion." Note, When we find ourselves dull, we must go to God, and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's word as a means of quickening, (for the words which God speaks, *they are spirit*

and they are life to those that receive them,) and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. 27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

We have here,

1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God; "*I have declared my ways*, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises." Thus *Jephthah uttered all his words*, and Hezekiah spread his letters before the Lord. "*I have declared my ways*, my wants, and burthens, and troubles, that I meet with in my way; or my sins, my by-ways, I have made an ingenuous confession of them, and thou heardest me, heardest patiently all I had to say, and tookest cognizance of my case." It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John v. 14, 15.

2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy; not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way; *Teach me thy statutes*, that is, *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts*. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he does not say, "Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be;" but, "Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, as the case stands." Note, Those who in all their ways acknowledge God, may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God, is, by learning his statutes, and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts. See 1 John i. 6, 7.

3. The good use he would make of this, for the honour of God and the edification of others; "Let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts, give me a clear, distinct, and methodical, knowledge of divine things; so shall I talk, with the more assurance, and more to the purpose, of thy wondrous works." We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

28. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29. Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, 1. David's representation of his own gricfs; *My soul melteth for heaviness*, which is to the same purport with v. 25. *My soul cleaveth to the dust*. Heaviness in the heart of man makes it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God.

2. His request for God's grace.

(1.) That God would enable him to bear his affliction well, and graciously support him under it; "*Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word*, which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the

burthens, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. *Strengthen me according to that word.* (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) *As thy day, so shall thy strength be."*

(2.) That God would keep him from using any unlawful, indirect, means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles; (v. 29.) *Remove from me the way of lying.* David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had, in a strait, cheated Ahimelech, (1 Sam. xxi. 2.) and Achish, v. 13. and ch. xxvii. 10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with colour of a pious fraud, and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays, that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit, and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads, and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

(3.) That he might always be under the conduct and protection of God's government; *Grant me thy law graciously;* grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his own hand; for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use; (Deut. xvii. 18.) but he prays that he might have it written in his heart; for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. "Grant it me more and more." They that know and love the law of God, cannot but desire to know it more, and love it better. Grant it me *graciously*; he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes truly gracious by giving them his law.

30. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. 32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

1. That those who will make any thing to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and deliberate choice; so David did; *I have chosen the way of truth.* Note, (1.) The way of serious godliness is the *way of truth*; the principles it is founded on are of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. (2.) We must therefore choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

2. That those who have chosen the *way of truth* must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking; *Thy judgments have I laid before me*; as he who learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it, as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the word in our heart, by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye, by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

3. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully; "*I have stuck to thy testimonies* with an unchanged affection, and an unshaken resolution; stuck to them at all times, through all trials. *I have chosen them*, and therefore *I have stuck to them.*" Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the steady Christian;

those that are Christians by chance tack about, if the wind turn.

4. That those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means that, when he begs, "*Lord, put me not to shame*"; never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion."

5. That the more comfort God gives us, the more duty he expects from us, v. 32. Here we have, (1.) His resolution to go on vigorously in religion; *I will run the way of thy commandments.* Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither, and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness; *we then run the way of our duty when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and lay aside every weight*, Heb. xii. 1. (2.) His dependence upon God for grace to do so; "*I shall then abound in thy works, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people, when he gives them wisdom; for that is called *largeness of heart*, 1 Kings iv. 29. When he *sheds abroad the love of God* in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

5. HE.

33. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. 34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Here, 1. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his Teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests, about him, and was himself well-instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that *none teaches like him*, Job xxxvi. 22. Observe here, (1.) *What* he desires to be taught; not the notions or language of God's statutes, but the way of them; "The way of applying them to myself, and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldest have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*," Isa. xxx. 21. (2.) *How* he desires to be taught; in such a way as no man could teach him; *Lord, give me understanding.* As the God of nature, he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray, that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature, we are averse to; *Give me understanding*, an enlightened understanding; for it is as good to have no understanding at all as not to have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end, unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the *Son of God is come, and has given us understanding*, 1 John v. 20.

2. He promises faithfully that he would be a good scholar; if God would teach him, he was sure he should learn to good purpose; "*I shall keep thy law*, which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and therefore I earnestly desire that I may be taught." If God, by his Spirit, gives us a right and good understanding, we shall be, (1.) Constant in our obedience; "*I shall keep it to the end*, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity." It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey. (2.) Cordial in our obedience

I shall observe it with my whole heart, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way which the *whole heart* goes, the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for it is *God that works in us both to will and to do*, as well as to understand, what is good, Phil. ii. 13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

1. The grace he prays for; (1.) That God would make him able to do his duty; "*Make me to go, strengthen me for every good work.*" Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to *walk in his statutes*; (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) and this is that which David here begs. (2.) That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it; "*Incline my heart to thy testimonies*, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do, and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty, as that which is agreeable to the new nature, and really advantageous to me." Duty is then done with delight, when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it, the more earnest we must be for that grace.

2. The sin he prays against, and that is, *covetousness*; "*Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies*, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to *covetousness*." That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin: those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*. See in what way God deals with men; not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good, and an aversion to that which is evil.

3. His plea to enforce this prayer; "Lord, bring me to, and keep me in, *the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight*; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thine own work?"

37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, 1. David prays for *restraining* grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty; *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity*. The honours, pleasures, and profits, of the world, are the vanities, the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness; the eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to *make a covenant with our eyes*, and lay

a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous, (Job xxxi. 1.) so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight, and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for *constraining* grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress; "*Quicken thou me in thy way*; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit." Beholding vanity deadens us, and slackens our pace; a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view, will not rid ground; but if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38. Establish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and disposal, and taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants, who, though they have their infirmities and defects, are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God*, and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has toward God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establish his word to them*, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so aspiring as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, v. 22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his own reputation, and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to *deliver him from all his transgressions*, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared; (xxxix. 8.) or he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their *lying lips be put to silence*.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; "Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and *thy judgments are right and good*, just and kind, to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men." It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while he that judges us is the Lord. Or thus, "Thy word, and ways, and thy holy religion, are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, *Lord, turn them away*; let not religion be wounded through my side."

40. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professes the ardent affection he had to the word of God; "*I have longed after thy precepts*; not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly

desired to know them more, and do them better; and am still pressing forward toward perfection." Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts; "*Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected.*"

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. "Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me, that I may prosecute it; *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise." Where God has wrought to will, he will work to do, and where he has wrought to desire, he will satisfy the desire.

6. VAU.

41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word. 42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. "Lord, thou art my Saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy; *let thy salvation come to me*; hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses, and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it."

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. (1.) The grace of God; *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation*: our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Jude 21. "Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me." (2.) The promise of God; "*Let it come according to thy word*, thy word of promise: *I trust in thy word*, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise." We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; "*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproaches me* for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me." When God saves those out of their troubles who trusted in him, he effectually silences those who would have *shamed that counsel of the poor*, (xiv. 6.) and their reproaches will be for ever silenced, when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to *speak a word in season* for the glory of God; *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth*. He means, "Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth, let me have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury *things new and old*, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it." We have need to

pray to God, that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, the *word of truth* was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, "Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty."

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which, the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead. (1.) David professes his confidence in God; "Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for I have *hoped in those judgments* of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand, my support and defence are departed from me." (2.) He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace; "*So shall I keep thy law continually*. If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will." Thus shall the *man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Col. iii. 16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, [1.] *Continually*, without trifling; God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. [2.] *For ever and ever*, without backsliding; we must never be *weary of well-doing*. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we *keep his law for ever and ever*. Or thus, "Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred *deposit* to the rising generation, (2 Tim. ii. 2.) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept *for ever and ever*, from one generation to another," according to that promise, (Isa. lix. 21.) *My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed*.

45. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. 46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God; "*I seek thy precepts*, v. 45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to *understand what the will of the Lord is*, and to discover the intimations of his mind. *I seek thy precepts*, for *I have loved them*, v. 47, 48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me." All that love God, love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promises himself here in the strength of God's grace.

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty; "*I will walk at liberty*, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly." The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, John viii. 32, 36. Luke i. 74, 75.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings*. Before David came to the crown, kings

were sometimes his judges, as Saul, and Achish; but, if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would *speak of God's testimonies*, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, D.m. iii. 16. Acts iv. 20. After David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him, and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion, for fear of affronting them, and making his conversation uneasy to them: no, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of *God's testimonies*, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty; (v. 47.) "*I will delight myself in thy commandments*, in conversing with them, in conforming to them; I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God." The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty; *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*; which denotes not only a vehement desire toward them, (cxliii. 6.) "I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go;" but a close application of mind to the observance of them; "I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it." The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be *lifted up*, Heb. xii. 12.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty; (v. 48.) "*I will meditate in thy statutes*; not only entertain myself with thinking of them, as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner." By *this* it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. ZAIN.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God, in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided.

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped; "Lord, I desire no more than that thou wouldest *remember thy word unto thy servant*, and *do as thou hast said*;" (see 1 Chron. xvii. 23.) "Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel. Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word." Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. "Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken; and hast not thou made it good?" Gen. xxxii. 9. Exod. xxxiii. 12.

2. That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in us desires towards

spiritual blessings more than toward any temporal good things; and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings; and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us, will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word:

1. As a means of his sanctification; "*Thy word hath quickened me*. It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me *to* that which is good, when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me *in* that which is good, when I was cold and indifferent."

2. Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, and needed something to support him; "Because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then." The word of God has much in it that speaks *comfort in affliction*; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it makes us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51. The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, the *proud* had him greatly in derision, they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it *cant*; for his seriousness, and called it *mofishness*; for his strictness, and called it *needless preciseness*. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat, and valued themselves on it.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion; "They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; *I have not declined from thy law* for all this; but, *if this be to be vile*" (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision,) "*I will be yet more vile*." He not only has not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never shrink from any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way, though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself: he not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find *no occasion against him*, save *only in the matters of his God*, Dan. vi. 5. They that are derided for their adherence to God's law, may comfort themselves with this, that the *reproach of Christ* will prove, in the end, *greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt*.

2. That which he comforted himself with, was, the remembrance of God's *judgments of old*, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's *judgments of old*, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; they *forsake thy law*. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement: he trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, (and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemy be as the wicked*;) and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was afraid would be hereby sunk and ruined. He does not say, "*Horror has taken hold on me*, because of their cruel designs against me," but "because of the contempt they put on God and his law." Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. v. 30.—xxiii. 14. Hos. vi. 10. Jer. ii. 12.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition; he was in the *house of his pilgrimage*, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble; he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly; or as his lot, in common with all; this world is the *house of our pilgrimage*, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn; we must confess ourselves *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, who are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the *house of his pilgrimage*.

2. His comfort in this state; "*Thy statutes have been my songs*, with which I here entertained myself; as travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and *put gladness into his heart*, more than they have that *chant to the sound of the viol*, Amos vi. 5. *Is any afflicted then?* Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so *sing away sorrow*, Ps. cxxxviii. 5.

55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God; he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. *This is his memorial unto all generations*, and therefore we should always keep it in memory; remember it *in the night*, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When

others were sleeping, David was remembering God's name, and, by repeating that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction, this he called to mind.

2. The conscience he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law; *I remembered thy name in the night*, and therefore was careful to *keep thy law* all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection, if our own hearts can witness for us, that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

3. The advantage he got by it; (v. 56.) *This I had, because I kept thy precepts*. Some understand this indefinitely; *This I had*; I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, *because I kept thy precepts*. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before; "I had the comfort of keeping thy law, because I kept it." Note, God's work is its own wages: a heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made *more fruitful*, John xv. 2.

8. CHETH.

57. Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

1. He makes the favour of God his felicity; *Thou art my Portion, O Lord*. Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world; their portion is in this life, they look no further; they desire no more, these are *their good things*; (Luke xvi. 25.) but all that are sanctified take the Lord for the Portion of their inheritance and their Cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter; "Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my Portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy."

2. He makes the law of God his rule; "*I have said, that I would keep thy words*; and what I have said, by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end." Note, Those that take God for their Portion, must take him for their Prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to *keep his word*, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, xxxix. 1.

58. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe,

1. What he prayed for; having taken God for his Portion, he *entreated his favour*, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble supplicants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us, and smile upon us. He prays, "*Be merciful to me*, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future."

2. How he prayed; *with his whole heart*; as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for: the gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it; *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*.

3. What he pleaded; the promise of God; "*Be*

merciful to me, according to thy word. I desire thy mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it." They that are governed by the precepts of the word, and are resolved to keep them, (v. 57.) may plead the promises of the word, and take the comfort of them.

59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

David had said he *would keep God's word*, (v. 57.) and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

1. He *thought on his ways*; he thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet, (Prov. iv. 26.) that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures; he thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in, and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed, abiding, thought. Some make it an allusion to those who work embroidery, who are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw; or, to those who cast up their accounts, who reckon with themselves, What do I owe? What am I worth? *I thought* not on my wealth, (as the covetous man, xlix. 11.) but *on my ways*; not what I have, but what I do: what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways, who never think of their own; but *let every man prove his own work*.

2. He *turned his feet to God's testimonies*; he determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies: he turned not only his eye to them, but his feet; his affections to the love of God's word, and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent and inclinations of his soul were toward God's testimonies, and his conversation was governed by them. Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

3. He did this immediately, and without demur; (v. 60.) *I made haste, and delayed not*. When we are under convictions of sin, we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a more convenient season; when we are called to duty, we must lose no time, but set about it *to-day, while it is called to-day*.

Now, this account, which David here gives of himself, may refer to his constant practice every day; he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good, he did it without delay; or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator; that blessed change was, by the grace of God, thus wrought. Note, (1.) Conversion begins in serious consideration, Ezek. xviii. 28. Luke xv. 17. (2.) Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways, if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1. The malice of David's enemies against him; they were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness; there were bands or troops of them confederate against him; they did him all the mischief they could, they robbed him; having endeavoured to take away his good name, (v. 51.) they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plun-

der in time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects; Absalom his palace; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of. David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. *Thieves break through and steal*.

2. The testimony of David's conscience for him, that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did, when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him; *But I have not forgotten thy law*. No care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for.

See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings; he does not say, "*I will give thanks*, because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of," but, "*Because of thy righteous judgments*; all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of." We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour, and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings; he would *rise at midnight, to give thanks* to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God, that, when others were in their beds, he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God *in the courts of the Lord's house*, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps, in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God, here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God; and observe,

1. Why he loved them; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest, and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as *feared God*, and *kept his precepts*, and so did him honour, and helped him to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is *then* sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him.

2. How he showed his love to them; he was a *companion of them*. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together; he sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows, (Heb. x. 33.) he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his expe-

riences to them, and consulted theirs. He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any, that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, Ps. xv. 4. Jam. ii. 1.

64. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures, according to their necessities and capacities; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, *is full of his mercy*: not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness; *his tender mercies are over all his works*.

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity; "*Teach me thy statutes*. Thou feedest the young ravens that cry, with food proper for them; and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? *The earth is full of thy mercy*; and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places?" A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing, to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely he that will not let his birds be unfed, will not let his children be untaught.

9. TETH.

65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.
66. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along; *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant*. However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt well with us, better than we deserve; and all in love, and with design to work for our good. In many instances, God has done well for us, beyond our expectations; he has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me*, not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise, and are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction; "*Teach me good judgment and knowledge*, that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me." Teach me a good taste, (so the word signifies,) a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for *the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat*. We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have *spiritual senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. Many have knowledge, who have little judgment; they who have both, are well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the service of God, and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea; "*For I have believed thy commandments*; received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, *teach me*." Where God has given a good heart, a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

67. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he has experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition; "*Before I was afflicted*, while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, *I went astray* from God and my duty." Sin is going astray; and then we are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See xxx. 6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how, and wherein, we went astray, *before we were afflicted*, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state; "*Now have I kept thy word*, and so have been recovered from my wanderings." God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first, and then to his father.

68. Thou art good, and doest good: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praises God's goodness, and gives him the glory of it; *Thou art good, and doest good*. All who have any knowledge of God, and dealings with him, will own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration, and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it; *Teach me thy statutes*. "Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful Benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me,—Instruct me in my duty incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and doest good*; Lord, *teach me thy statutes*, that I may be good, and do good, may have a good heart, and live a good life. It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will *teach them his way*, because he is *good and upright*, xxv. 8.

69. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. 70. Their heart is as fat as grease: but I delight in thy law.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty; *They have forged a lie against me*; thus they aimed to take away his good name: nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. They that were proud, envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them; and therefore did all they could to blemish him: they took a pride in trampling upon him: they therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories, which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do, when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids

him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silent. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution; "Let them say what they will, *I will keep thy precepts*, and not dread their reproach."

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty; *Their heart is as fat as grease*. The proud are *at ease*; (cxxxiii. 4.) they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, (1.) Senseless, secure, and stupid; they are past feeling; thus the phrase is used, (Isa. vi. 10.) *Make the heart of this people fat*. They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God, or his rod. (2.) Sensual and voluptuous; "Their eyes stand out with fatness"; (Ps. lxxiii. 7.) they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them, I would not change conditions with them; *I delight in thy law*; I build my security upon the promises of God's word, and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights." The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

See here, 1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked live in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people*, lxxiii. 10.

2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally; *It was good for me*; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to, which otherwise had been unlearned and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction, *that he might learn God's statutes*; and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom*.

72. *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

This is a reason why David reckoned, that, when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much balance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's *law*, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was *better* to him than all the *gold and silver* which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God, in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, therefore he valued the law, because it is *the law of God's mouth*, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

2. He had a great deal of gold and silver, in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he values it; his riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's *Psalms* and Solomon's *Ecclesiastes*, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

73. *Thy hands have made me, and fa-*

shioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here, 1. David adores God as the God of nature, and the Author of his being; *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, Job x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16. "Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I had never been, but *fashioned me*, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties;" and we must own that we are *fearfully and wonderfully made*.

2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the Author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, "Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation, and live to some purpose; *give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments*." The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men, is, by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul, and gains possession of it.

74. *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.*

Here is, 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation; *I have hoped in thy word*; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that *maketh not ashamed*; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.

2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation; "They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me relieved by my hope in thy word, and delivered according to my hope." The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. St. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, 2 Cor. i. 11.—iv. 15. Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those (and, as I may say, proud of them) who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75. *I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

Still David is in affliction, and, being so, he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected; *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right*, are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature, and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his *judgments are right*, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for

our good; "*In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, pursuant to the great design of my salvation.*" It is easier to own, in general, that *God's judgments are right*, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, "*Even my afflictions are just and kind.*"

76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. 77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. They that own the justice of God in their afflictions, (as David had done, *v. 75.*) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's *merciful kindness*, (*v. 76.*) his *tender mercies*, *v. 77.* He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. "*Let these come to me,*" that is, "*the evidence of them; clear it up to me, that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store; and let the effects of them come; let them work my relief and deliverance.*"

2. The benefit he promised himself from God's loving-kindness; "*Let it come to me for my comfort;*" (*v. 76.*) that will comfort me, when nothing else will; that will comfort me, whatever grieves me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the Fountain of all happiness and joy; "*Let it come to me, that I may live,* that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. *In his favour is life*, in his frowns are death." A good man cannot live, with any satisfaction, any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, (1.) God's promise; "*Let me have thy kindness, according to thy word unto thy servant;* the kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants, that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him. (2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise; "*Thy law is my delight;* I hope in thy word, and rejoice in that hope." Note, Those that delight in the law of God, may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78. Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts. 79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shows,

1. How little he valued the ill-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned toward him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that deal most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David mattered it not, for, (1.) He knew it was *without cause*, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. (2.) He could pray, in faith, that they might *be ashamed* of it, God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "*Let them be ashamed;* let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin." (3.) He could go on in the way of his duty, and find

comfort in that. "However they deal with me, *I will meditate in thy precepts*, and entertain myself with them."

2. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them, and communion with them: *Let those that fear thee, turn to me.* He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates, that, when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them *turn to me* again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, *that have known thy testimonies*, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with, and subject to, the power of it; that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: *that I be not ashamed.* Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not; "*Let my heart be sound,* that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. *Let my heart be sound,* that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day."

11. CAPH.

81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope in thy word. 82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the psalmist,

1. Longing for help from heaven; *My soul faints, mine eyes fail.* He longs for the salvation of the Lord, and for his word, that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith; salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning, and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old Testament church; the souls of the faithful even *fainted* to seek salvation of which the prophets testified; (1 Pct. i. 10.) their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch, and they could not steadfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried out, *When wilt thou comfort me?* Comfort me with *thy salvation*, comfort me with *thy word*. Observe, (1.) The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. (2.) The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long-deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them. (3.) Though we think the time long, ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon it, and resolve to

take up with nothing short of it. "Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon."

2. Waiting for that help; assured that it will come, and tarrying till it doth come; *But I hope in thy word*; and, but for hope, the heart would break. When the eyes fail, yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

33. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke, yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him.

1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity; Lord, make haste to help me, for *I am become like a bottle in the smoke*, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with the smoke, is thrown by, and there is no more use of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David, in his low estate, looked upon as a despised, broken, vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

2. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise; *Yet do I not forget thy statutes*. Whatever our outward condition is, we must not cool in our affliction to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law, (Prov. xxxi. 5.) so others weep and forget the law; but we must, in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance; and, if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

34. How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, 1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself, (he bore no malice to any,) but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay, (Rom. xii. 19.) as the God that sits in the throne, judging right. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people; tribulation to them that troubled them; Enoch foretold it, (Jude 14.) whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for, and pray for the hastening of; *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*.

2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble; *"How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few;"* so some; "therefore let them not all be miserable; and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, before I go hence, and shall be seen no more." Or rather, *"The days of my affliction are many"*, thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elects' sake, the days of trouble are shortened. Oh let the days of my

trouble be shortened; I am thy servant; and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until that thou have mercy on me."

35. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. 36. All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me. 37. They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians, that he was grievously persecuted: as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as those here. Where observe,

1. The account he gives of his persecutors, and their malice against him. (1.) They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. (2.) They were unjust; they persecuted him wrongfully; so far was he from giving them any provocation, that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. (3.) They were spiteful; they digged pits for him; which showed that they were deliberate in their designs against him, and that what they did was of malice prepense: it intimates likewise, that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom; that they were industrious, and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief; and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, xxxv. 7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. (4.) They herein showed their enmity to God himself; the pits they digged for him were not after God's law; he means, they were very much against his law, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour, and has particularly said, *Touch not mine anointed*. The law appointed, that if a man digged a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief, (Exod. xxi. 33, 34.) much more, when it was digged with a malicious design. (5.) They carried on their designs against him so far, that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those who shall shortly be consummate in heaven, may be, for the present, almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies, (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy,) that they are not quite consumed. But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

2. His application to God in his persecuted state. (1.) He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered; "However it be, all thy commandments are faithful, and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it." True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. "Men are false, I find them so; men of low degree, men of high degree, are so, there is no trusting them; but all thy commandments are faithful, on them I may rely." (2.) He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him; "They persecute me, help thou me; help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles." God help me, is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is pity that it should ever be used lightly, and as a by-word.

3. His adherence to his duty, notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors; (v. 37.) *But I forsook not thy precepts*. That which they aimed at, was,

to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world, than forsake the word of God; would sooner lose his life, than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88. Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty; his constant desire and design are, to *keep the testimony of God's mouth*, to keep to it as his rule, and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose.

2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein; "*Quicken me after thy loving-kindness*; make me alive, and make me lively, *so shall I keep thy testimonies*;" implying, that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us, and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, *Quicken me in thy righteousness*; (v. 40.) but here, *Quicken me after thy loving-kindness*. The surest token of God's good-will toward us, is his good work in us.

12. LAMED.

89. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. 90. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

Here, 1. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. "*For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself*," so some read it; thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. *Thy word*, by which the heavens were made, *is settled* there in the abiding products of it;" or the settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. *All flesh is grass*; but *the word of the Lord endures for ever*. It is settled in heaven, in the secret counsel of God, which is hid in himself, and is far above out of our sight, and is immoveable, *as mountains of brass*. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations*; the promise is sure to every age of the church, and it cannot be antiquated by track of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature; *Thou hast established the earth, and it abides*; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and, notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, remains unmoved. "*They*" (the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both) "*continue to this day according to thine ordinances*;" they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them, they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended." The stability of the ordinances of day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced, to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. —xxxiii. 20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah, (Gen. viii. 22.) that *day and night, sum-*

mer and winter, observe a steady course. "They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants, they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both *are thy servants*." All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burthen of the earth?

92. Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1. The great distress that David was in; he was in affliction, and ready to *perish in his affliction*; not likely to die, so much as likely to despair: he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God, and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet, if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, *We have cleansed our hands in vain*; or, *What profit is it that we have served God?*

2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight, (1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity. (2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time, if we please.

93. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution; "*I will never forget thy precepts*," but will always retain a remembrance of, and regard to, thy word as my rule." It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God, is, never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion; and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion; but that we will be constant to it, and persevere in it.

2. A very good reason for it; "*For by them, thou hast quickened me*; not only they are quickening, but," (1.) "They have been so to me, I have found them so." Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say, that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. (2.) "Thou hast made them so;" the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us; ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word, and makes use of it as a means of quickening; and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found such benefit by, and hope still to find. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, *good affections*; if we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that does really quicken us to, and in, our duty, is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well.

94. *I am thine; save me; for I have sought thy precepts.*

Here, 1. David claims relation to God; "*I am thine*, devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant." He does not say, *Thou art mine*, (as Dr. Manton observes,) though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge; but, *I am thine*, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, *I am thus*, but, *I am thine*, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him; "*I am thine*, not my own, not the world's."

2. He proves his claim; "*I have sought thy precepts*, I have carefully inquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it." This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.

3. He improves his claim; "*I am thine; save me*, save me from sin, save me from ruin." Those that have, in sincerity, given up themselves to God, to be his, may be sure that he will protect them, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal. iii. 18.

95. *The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.*

Here, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies; *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me, to destroy me*; they were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were *confident*, they *expected*, (so some read it,) that they should destroy him, they thought themselves sure of their prey.

2. He comforts himself in the word of God, as his protection; "While they are contriving my destruction, *I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to me my salvation." God's testimonies are then likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Here we have David's testimony, from his own experience,

1. Of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; *I have seen an end of all perfection*. Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had *seen an end of perfection, of all perfection*; he saw it by faith, he saw it by observation, he saw an end of the perfection of the creature, both in respect of sufficiency, it was scanty and defective, (there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do,) and, in respect of continuance, it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity, as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction; *But thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad*. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burthens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we *have seen an end of all perfection*.

13. MEM.

97. *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God; *O how love I thy law!* He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart, which, considering the corruption of his nature, and the temptation of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love, we love to think of; by *this* it appeared that David loved the word of God, it was his *meditation*. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and *all the day* some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts; so full was he of the word of God.

98. *Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.* 99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.* 100. *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the *Israelites indeed*.

1. The good method by which he got it. In his youth, he minded business in the country, as a shepherd; *from his youth*, he minded business in the court and camp; which way, then, could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the Author; *Thou hast made me wise*: all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God, as the means; *by his commandments and his testimonies*. These are able to *make us wise to salvation*, and to *furnish the man of God for every good work*. (1.) These David took for his constant companions; "*They are ever with me*, ever in my mind, ever in my eye." A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. (2.) These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his *meditation*, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. (3.) These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions; *I keep thy precepts*; I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is, to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ*, shall know more and more of it, John vii. 17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; the *pure in heart shall see God* here.

2. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to *behave himself wisely in all his ways*, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. (1.) He outwitted his enemies; God, by these means, made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments, we secure

God on our side, and make him our Friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their Enemy: by keeping the commandments, we preserve to ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. (2.) He outstript his teachers, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct, and undertook to prescribe to him: by keeping God's commandments, he managed his matters so, that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures, and they had taken the wrong. Or, he may mean those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or, he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid, that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had *spiritual senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By *meditation* we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. (3.) He outdid the ancients; either those of his day, he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, (but his keeping of God's precepts taught him more wisdom than the multitude of their years, Job xxxii. 7, 8.) or those of former days: he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients; (1 Sam. xxiv. 13.) but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin; "*I have refrained my feet from the evil ways* they were ready to step aside into; I checked myself, and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation." Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he *refrained his feet from it*, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*, xvii. 4.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty; *That I might keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, (1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to *keep God's word*, and had made that his rule. (2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot, with any comfort or boldness, attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt, or in any by-way.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had *not departed from God's judgments*; he had

not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God, in trying times, will be a good evidence of our integrity.

2. The cause of his constancy; "*For thou hast taught me*, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *Yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! 104. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; it was *sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey*. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things; such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have *heard him ourselves*, John iv. 42. To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace no pleasure was comparable to it.

2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God; (1.) It helped him to a good head; "*Through thy precepts I get understanding*, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life, or in advising others." (2.) It helped him to a good heart; "*Therefore*, because I have got understanding of the truth, *I hate every false way*, and am steadfastly resolved not to turn aside into it." Observe here, The way of sin is a *false way*, it deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Prov. xiv. 12. It is the character of every good man, that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a *false way*; he not only refrains his feet from it, (v. 101.) but he *hates it*, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. Those who hate sin as sin, will hate all sin, hate *every false way*, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the word of God, the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for, *to depart from evil, that is understanding*; (Job xxviii. 28.) and the more ready we are in the scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

14. NUN.

105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a *lamp* and a *light*, it discovers to us *that*, concerning God and ourselves, which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it; it is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Prov. vi. 23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit; it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire, to Israel.

2. The use we should make of it. It must be not only a *light to our eyes*, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a *light to our feet* and

to our path, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation; both in the choice of our way in general, and in the particular steps we take in that way; that we may not take a *false way*, nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light, when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, 1. The notion David had of religion; it is, *keeping God's righteous judgments*. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are *righteous judgments*, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself, by his own promise, to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. "*I have sworn*, I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back; and therefore must go forward, *I will perform it*." Note, (1.) It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse, if we do not perform it. (2.) We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. (3.) We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths; (an honest man will be as good as his word;) nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt, if we do not perform.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. The presentation David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in; *I am afflicted very much*, afflicted in spirit; he seems to mean that especially: he laboured under many discouragements; without were fightings, within were fears: this is often the lot of the best saints, therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace, "*Quicken me, O Lord*; make me lively, make me cheerful, quicken me, by afflictions, to greater diligence in my work: *quicken me*; deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead." He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it; *Quicken me according to thy word*. David resolved to perform his promises to God, (v. 106.) and therefore could, with humble boldness, beg of God to make good his word to him.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances.

1. Acceptance of them; this we must aim at in all we do in religion, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of, is, the *free-will-offerings*, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises; *the calves of our lips*, (Hos. xiv. 2.) *the fruit of our lips*, (Heb. i. 15.) these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be *free-will-offerings*, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully; and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God, the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them; *Teach me thy judgments*. We cannot offer any thing to God, which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us, as for the favour of God towards us.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the *wicked have laid a snare* for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was, he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for that was it they aimed at; what they could not effect by open force, they hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, *My soul is continually in my hand*: it was not so with him, only as a *man*, (so it is true of us all; wherever we are, we lie exposed to the strokes of death, what we carry in our hand, is easily snatched away from us by violence, or, if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers,) but as a *man of war*, a soldier, who often jeopardied his life in the high places of the field; and especially as a *man after God's own heart*, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and always delivered to death, (2 Cor. iv. 11.) *killed all the day long*.

2. David in no danger of losing his religion, notwithstanding this. Thus, in jeopardy every hour, and yet constant to God and his duty, none of these things move him: for, (1.) *He does not forget the law*, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety, he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever; and, where that dwells richly, it will be a *well of living water*. (2.) *He has not yet erred from God's precepts*, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock, and kept his ground, and surely that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

111. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.

The psalmist here, in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God, and to live and die by it.

1. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it; "*Thy testimonies*, the truths, the promises, of thy word, *have I taken as a heritage for ever*, for they are the *rejoicing of my heart*." The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were, in his account, the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. (1.) He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies; the covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as a *heritage for ever*. If he could not yet say, *They are my heritage*, yet he could say, "*I have made choice of them for my heritage*, and will never take up with a *portion in this life*," xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, *if children, then heirs*; they are a *heritage for ever*, and that no earthly heritage is; (1 Pet. i. 4.) all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore be content with but little of this world.

(2.) He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them; *They are the rejoicing of my heart*, because they will be *my heritage for ever*. It requires the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God, and not in the possession of this world.

2. He resolves to govern himself by it, and thence to take his measures; *I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes*. They that would have the blessings of God's testimonies, must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, (1.) With full consent and complacency; "*I have*, by the grace of God, *inclined my heart to it*, and conquered the aversion I had to it." A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. (2.) With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this *to the end*, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. SAMECH.

113. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Here is, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it; *I hate vain thoughts*. He does not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God: vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer. iv. 14. Though David could not say that he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say that he *hated them*; he did not countenance them, or give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. *The evil I do, I allow not*.

2. David's delight in the rule of duty; *but thy law do I love*, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that we love.

114. Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Here is, 1. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforts himself with, when his enemies were very malicious against him; *Thou art my Hiding-place, and my Shield*. David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter. In war, he guarded himself with his shield, now God was both these to him; a Hiding-place to preserve him from danger, and a Shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death, and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection. He is their *Strength and their Shield*, their *Help and their Shield*; their *Sun and their Shield*; their *Shield and their great Reward*; and here, their *Hiding-place and their Shield*. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their Hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

2. David's confidence in God; he is safe, and therefore he is easy, under the divine protection. "I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me."

They who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power, and be taken under his special protection.

115. Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life; *I will keep the commandments of my God*. Bravely resolved! like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin, and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments, must be often renewing their resolutions to do so; "*I will keep them*: whatever others do, this I will do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers, and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good."

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution; *Depart from me, ye evil-doers*. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must have no society with evil-doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do, nor do as they would have us do, Ps. i. 1. Eph. v. 11.

116. Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope. 117. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice; *Uphold me*, and again, *Hold thou me up*. He sees himself, not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin, unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, (xli. 12.) to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing, nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no further than he carries us.

2. He pleads earnestly for this grace.

(1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it; "*Uphold me, according to thy word*, which word I hope in; and if it be not performed, I shall be made *ashamed of my hope*, and be called a fool for my credulity." But they that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed.

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him; *Uphold me, that I may live*; intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained, and be an earnest of eternal life. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe*; out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports.

(3.) He pleads his resolution, in the strength of this grace, to proceed in his duty; "*Hold me up*, and then *I will have respect unto thy statutes continually*, and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them." *I will employ myself*, so some; *I will de-*

light myself, so others, in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must, in his strength, go on in our duty, both with diligence and with pleasure.

118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. 119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like dross*: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Here is, 1. God's judgments on wicked people, on those that *wander from his statutes*, that take their measures from other rules, and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are *the wicked of the earth*; they mind earthly things, and lay up their treasures in the earth, and live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now, see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them, nor envy them. (1.) *He treads them all down*; he brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are ever so high, he can bring them low; (Amos ii. 9.) he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud, and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them. (2.) *He puts them all away like dross*. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And, in God's account, they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous, than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous, (Matth. xiii. 49.) so that they shall have no place in their congregation; (Ps. i. 5.) which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes, in this world, the wicked are, by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, *put away as dross*, Prov. xxv. 4, 5.

2. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off, because they *err from his statutes*; they that will not submit to the commands of the word, shall feel the curses of it. And because *their deceit is falsehood*, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from; and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. *Their cunning is falsehood*, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

3. The improvement David made of these judgments; he took notice of them, and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase, (1.) His love to the word of God: "I see what comes of sin; therefore I love thy testimonies, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses, and keep me from the paths of the destroyer." We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. (2.) His fear of the wrath of God: *My flesh trembles for fear of thee*. Instead of insulting over those who fall under God's displeasure, he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people, should make us, [1.] To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him; *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* 1 Sam. vi. 20. [2.] To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to

his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by *the terrors of the Lord*; especially when judgment *begins at the house of God*, and hypocrites are discovered, and *put away as dross*.

16. AIN.

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. 122. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God,

1. As his Witness, that he had not done wrong; he could truly say, "*I have done judgment and justice*; I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not, by force or fraud, hindered any of their right." Take him as a king, he *executed judgment and justice to all his people*; (2 Sam. viii. 15.) take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself, that *there was no evil or transgression in his hand*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy, and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his Judge, that he might not be wronged; he, having done justice for others that were oppressed, begs that God would do him justice, and avenge him of his adversaries; "*Be surety for thy servant for good*; undertake for me against those that would run me down, and ruin me." He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our Surety with God; and, if he be so, Providence shall be our Surety against all the world; who, or what, shall harm us, if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be *for good*, in such way and manner as infinite Wisdom sees best; only *let me not be left to mine oppressors*. Though David had *done judgment and justice*, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his Friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him; and in that hope he prayed again, *Let not the proud oppress me*. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off: the condition, therefore, of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly; *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation*. His eyes were towards it, and had been long so: he looked for help from heaven, and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men, to be weary of waiting *God's time*, when their time is elapsed.

2. Yet he cannot but hope that it comes surely. for he expects *the word of God's righteousness*, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word does not, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction; "*Teach me thy statutes*; give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me; now that I am afflicted, oppressed, and mine eyes ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is, in this condition." In difficult times, we should desire more to be told what we must do, than what we may expect; and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture-precepts than of scripture-prophecies. If God, who gave us his statutes, do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches, is implied in the next petition, *Give me understanding*, a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light, *that I may know thy testimonies*. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding, without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those who know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His pleas to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him; *Deal with me according to thy mercy*. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, "Let me have it according to thy mercy;" for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are then most likely to be easy, when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God; "*I am thy servant*, and have work to do for thee, therefore *teach me* to do it, and to do it well." The servant has reason to expect, that, if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and if it were in his power, give him an understanding. "Lord," says David, "I desire to serve thee, show me how." If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, John vii. 17. Ps. xxv. 14.

126. *It is time for thee, LORD, to work; for they have made void thy law.*

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked; David, having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God. "Lord, there are those that *have made void thy law*, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands. They that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do, in effect, *make void the law*, saying, *Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty, that we should fear him?* It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment, would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin, and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A desire that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour. "*It is time for thee, Lord, to work*, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens." God's time to work, is, when vice is become most raving, and the measure of iniquity is full. *Now will I arise, saith the Lord*. Some read it, and the original will bear it, *it is time to work for thee, O Lord*; it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

∴ 27 Therefore I love thy commandments

above gold, yea, above fine gold. 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

David here, as often in this psalm, professes the great love he had to the word and law of God; and, to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

1. The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money; *above gold, yea, above fine gold*. Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so as gold does; it is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it: but David saw that the word of God answers all purposes better than money does; for it enriches the soul toward God, and therefore he loved it better than gold; for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

2. The ground of his love. Therefore he loved all God's commandments, because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and therefore we must love them, because they bear God's image, and are the revelations of his will. If we thus consent to the law, that it is good, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

3. The fruit and evidence of this love; He hated every false way. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts, which are right, is a false way, and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law, hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

17. PE.

129. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here, how David was affected toward the word of God.

1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself; *Thy testimonies are wonderful*. The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful; its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He adhered to it, as of constant use to him; "*Therefore doth my soul keep them*, as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without." We do not keep them to any purpose, unless our souls keep them; there they must be deposited as the tables of the testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. They that see God's word to be admirable, will prize it highly, and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1. The great use for which the word of God was intended; to give light, that is, to give understanding; to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful, for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place.

2. Its efficacy for this purpose; it admirably ar

swers the end; for, (1.) Even the *entrance of God's word gives light*. If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find, that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising, and yet satisfying, discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see, when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths, the milk appointed for the babes, bring a great light into the soul, much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. The exposition or explication of thy word giveth light; then it is most profitable, when ministers do their part in *giving the sense*, Neh. iii. 3. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality. (2.) It would *give understanding even to the simple*, to the weakest capacities; for it shows us a way to heaven, so plain, that the *wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*.

131. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The desire David had toward the word of God; *I longed for thy commandments*. When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances, he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances, he greedily sucked in the word of God, as *new-born babes desire the milk*. When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

2. The degree of that desire, appearing in the expression of it; *I opened my mouth, and panted*; as one, overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be toward God, and the remembrance of his name, xlii. 1, 2. Luke xii. 50.

132. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, 1. David's request for God's favour to himself; *"Look graciously upon me*; let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance; take cognizance of me and my affairs, *and be merciful to me*; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy, and receive the gifts of thy mercy." See how humble his petition is; he asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he does not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people; *As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name*. Which speaks, either, (1.) A plea for mercy; "Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people?" Or, (2.) A description of the favour and mercy he desired; that which *thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen*, evi. 4, 5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him; which are such as *eye has not seen*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with them that love him, are such, that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than

as he uses to deal with those that love him, we have no reason to complain, 1 Cor. x. 13.

133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is, in this verse, as earnest for the good work of God in him, as, in the verse before, for the good-will of God toward him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty; *"Order my steps in thy word*; having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the conduct of thy grace." We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God, that, by his good Spirit, he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin; *"Let not iniquity have dominion over me*, so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it." The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer, (Rom. vi. 14.) *Sin shall not have dominion over you*.

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious; *"Deliver me from the oppression of man*; man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited; let them know themselves to be but men, (ix. 20.) and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.

2. He promises that then he would live in *all godliness and honesty*. Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear; *so will I keep thy precepts*." Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression; but so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully, and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed." Then we may expect temporal blessings, when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king: now here, as became a good servant,

1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chiefest good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but, *"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*; let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day; if the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile."

2. He is very solicitous about his master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern; this he would be instructed in, that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it; *Teach me thy statutes*. Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Here we have David in sorrow,

1. It is a great sorrow; to that degree, that he weeps *ivers of tears*; commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye; in conformity to Christ, who was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour; (v. 135.) now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of them that mourned in Zion, and they that do so shall be comforted, Isa. lxi. 3.

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour to God, *Because they keep not thy law*. 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, those about me*, v. 139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. TZADDI.

137. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. 138. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

Here is, 1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature: as he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him; there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God: his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he doeth all according to it.

2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can, do any wrong to any of his creatures; *Upright are thy judgments*, the promises and threatenings are executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause, and will judge accordingly.

3. The righteousness of his commands, which he has given to be the rule of our obedience; "*Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded*, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceeding *righteous and faithful*: righteousness and faithfulness itself." As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves, and like him; that we be just to ourselves and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practice is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139. My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy word.

Here is, 1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion; *Mine enemies have forgotten thy words*. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them, that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them; not only, through carelessness, let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God; they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.

2. The great concern which godly men show for religion. David reckoned those his enemies who forgot the words of God, because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his *zeal* even consumed him, when he observed their impie-

ties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness as preyed upon his spirits, *ate them up*. (as Christ's zeal, John ii. 17.) swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. *My zeal has pressed or constrained me*; so Dr. Hammond reads it, Acts xviii. 5. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least, to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are, the better we should be.

140. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God; *Thy servant loves it*. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will, and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace, there is a warm attachment to the word of God.

2. The ground and reason of that affection; he saw it to be *very pure*, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is *then* an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity; because it bears the image of God's holiness and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity; and as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so, if we receive it in the light and love of it, it will refine us from the dross of wordliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141. I am small and despised; yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet *small and despised*, in his own account, and in the account of many others. Men's real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it often exposes them to the scorn of some, and always makes them low in their own eyes. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

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. He will not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are *small and despised*, we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is *righteousness*, and it is an *everlasting righteousness*; it is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God, that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God; we are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man: here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and

direct the motions of the whole man. But, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will, and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law, (John xviii. 37.) and God's law is the truth; surely we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; yet thy commandments are my delights. 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvements.

1. He again professes his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said, (v. 141.) *I am small and despised*, and yet adhere to my duty; here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so. *Trouble and anguish have laid hold on me*; trouble without, anguish within; they surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are in *heavenliness through manifold temptations*. There he had said, *Yet do I not forget thy precepts*; here he carries his constancy much higher; *Yet thy commandments are my delights*. All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them, and find that peace and pleasure in them, which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of, when they are in trouble and anguish, 2 Cor. i. 5.

2. He again acknowledges the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before; (v. 142.) *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting*, and cannot be altered; and when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, *a well of living water*, John iv. 14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, (1.) His prayer for grace; *Give me understanding*. Those that know much of the word of God, should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He does not say, "Give me a further revelation," but, *Give me a further understanding*; what is revealed, we should desire to understand, and what we know, to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. (2.) His hope of glory; "Give me this renewed understanding, and when I shall live; shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the reward, in the prospect of it." *This is life eternal, to know God*, John xvii. 3.

19. KOPH.

145. I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. 146. I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, (1.) That he was inward with God in prayer, he prayed *with his heart*; and the prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour. (2.) He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection,

and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. He *cried with his whole heart*; all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost, in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed, when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. (3.) That he directed his prayer to God; *I cried unto thee*. Whither should the child go but to his father, when any thing ails him? (4.) That the great thing he prayed for was salvation; *Save me*. A short prayer; for we mistake, if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking; but a comprehensive prayer; "Not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy." We need desire no more than God's salvation, (1. 25.) and the things that accompany it, Heb. vi. 9. (5.) That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them; (Ps. v. 3.) "Lord, hear me, and let me know that thou hearest me."

2. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty, when he was in the pursuit of mercy. "I will keep thy statutes; I am resolved that by thy grace I will;" for, *if we turn away our ear from hearing the law*, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, Prov. xxviii. 9. This purpose is used as a humble plea; (v. 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 the opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. 148. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

1. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were, (1.) Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately; "I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me." (2.) Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language, and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

2. The hours of his devotion; he *prevented the dawning of the morning*; nay, and the *night-watches*. 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 waked 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 spare as our food, Job xxiii. 12. (4.) That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full or

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 to find time for prayer. And 'his is our comfort, when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for 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.

149. Hear my voice, according unto thy loving-kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, 1. David applies himself to God for grace and comfort, with much solemnity. He begs of God to *hear his voice*; "Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain a gracious audience?" Well, what has he to say? What is his petition, and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little; "*Lord, quicken me*; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act."

2. He encourages himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends, (1.) Upon God's loving-kindness; "He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His loving-kindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me." 2. Upon God's judgment, that is, his wisdom; "He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me." Or his promise, the word which he has spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant; *Quicken me, according to the tenor of that covenant.*

150. They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. 151. Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

Here is, 1. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies. (1.) They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs; they *follow after mischief*, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity, nor let fall any pursuit, that might be to his hurt. (2.) They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes; *They are far from thy law*; setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of his convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself; we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. (3.) They followed him close, and he was just ready to fall into their hands; *They draw nigh*, nigher than they were; so that they got ground of him: they were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said, (1 Sam. xx. 3.) *There is but a step between them and death.* Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, *v.* 149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

2. The assurance David had of protection with God; "*They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near; O Lord, to save me*; not only mightier than they, and therefore *able to help me* against them, but nearer than they, and therefore *ready to help.*" It is the happiness of the saints, that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, Deut. iv. 7. *All thy commandments are truth.* The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out

of their power, they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, *All thy commandments are truth*; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity; such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are *founded for ever*, so that, when heaven and earth are passed away, every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, 2 Cor. i. 20.

2. David had found it so; both by a work of God's grace upon his heart, (begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word, and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction,) and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he *knew of old*, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look toward God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life, all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him, will own that they have found him faithful.

20. RESH.

153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me; for I do not forget thy law. 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

Here, 1. David prays for succour in distress. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*; let him pray as David does here. (1.) He has an eye to God's pity, and prays, "*Consider mine affliction*; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, 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*, (Isa. xliii. 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. (2.) 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; (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. (3.) 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, Isa. li. 22. Jer. l. 34. (4.) 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. O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!"

2. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and upon his guidance; *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.

155. *Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.*

Here is, 1. The description of wicked men; they do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, or in the least endeavour to do it. Those are wicked indeed, who do not think the law of God worth inquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large, and to walk in the way of their heart.

2. Their doom; *Salvation is far from them.* They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance. *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* How can they expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, who never sought his statutes, when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken, it is far from them, they thrust it from them, by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them, that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin, the further it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not; *Behold, the Judge stands before the door.*

156. *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD; quicken me according to thy judgments.*

Here, 1. David admires God's grace; *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord.* The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints; his mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, (v. 155.) but God is good notwithstanding; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not despised the riches of those mercies. They that are delivered from the sinner's doom, are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving, quickening, grace, according to his judgments, according to the tenor of the new covenant, that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace. Or, according to his manner, his custom or usage with those that love his name, v. 132.

157. *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.*

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers; *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies.* When Saul, the king, was his persecutor and enemy, no marvel that many more were so; multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies, but withal he had many friends, who loved him and wished him well, let him set the one over against the other. In this, David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors of both, are many, very many.

2. David established in the way of his duty, notwithstanding; *"Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies,* as knowing that, while I adhere to them, God is for me; and then no matter who is against me." A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158. *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*

Here is, 1. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He beheld the transgressors, those whose sins were open before all men, and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so in ducious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those who have any regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

2. The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God; *They kept not thy word.* They that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159. *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving-kindness.*

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts; "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name." He does not say, "Consider how I fulfil thy precepts;" he was conscious to himself, that in many things he came short; but, "Consider how I love them." Our obedience is then only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon; "Quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive; not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but according to thy loving-kindness;" to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's loving-kindness will quicken us.

160. *Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it. *It is true from the beginning.* Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men, all he said was true, and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by track of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage. *Quod initio non valet, tractu temporis convalescit*—That which, at first, wanted validity, in the progress of time, acquired it. But the beginning of God's word was true, so some read it; his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it faithful and well worthy of all acceptation.

2. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous. Every one of the judgments endures for ever unalterable, and of perpetual obligation; adjusting men's everlasting doom.

21. SCHIN.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*

David here lets us know,

1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the

tear of man; *Princes persecuted him*. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bid him *go serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse, if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But, *marvel not at the matter*, Eccl. v. 8. It was a comfort to David, that, when princes persecuted him, he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God; "They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but *my heart stands in awe of thy word*, and I was resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased, and falls out with me." Every gracious soul *stands in awe* of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts, and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so, nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, Luke xii. 4, 5. The heart that *stands in awe of God's word*, is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light, when other nations sat in darkness; that he was himself let into the understanding of it, and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said, that his heart *stood in awe of his word*, and yet here, that he rejoiced in it; the more reverence we have for the word of God, the more joy we shall find in it.

2. The degree of that pleasure, *as one that finds great spoil*. This supposes a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to *rejoice in God's word*. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163. I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed right, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed right in David.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin, he could not endure to think of it; *I hate and abhor lying*; which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God, and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying, in commerce or conversation, is a sin, which every good man hates and abhors, hates and doubly hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates, *one is a lying tongue*, and *another is a false witness that speaks lies*, Prov. vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie, because by the former we only receive an

affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God; *Thy law do I love*. And therefore he *abhorred lying*, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God, was, because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth, the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164. Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgments.

David, in this psalm, is full of complaints, yet those did neither jumble out his praises, nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in, he does not want matter for praise, and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

1. How often David praised God; *Seven times a day*, very frequently; not only every day but often every day. Many think that once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God *seven times a day* at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in.

We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God *seven times a day*, for the subject can never be exhausted, and our affections should never be tired. See v. 62.

2. What he praised God for; *because of thy righteous judgments*. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, who are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, that make it their rule, and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity: none enjoy themselves more than they do; *Great peace have they that love thy law*, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty, and pleasure in reflecting upon it. *The work of righteousness is peace*, (Isa. xxxii. 17.) such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without, and yet enjoy great peace within; *sat lucis intus—abundance of internal light*. They that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer their expectation; they that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security; *Nothing shall offend them*; nothing shall be scandal, snare, or stumbling-block, to them, to entangle them, either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and to preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God does. *Nothing shall offend or hurt them*, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they reconcile themselves to it. They, in whom this holy love reigns, will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, or to take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7.

166. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: "LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for

that as my happiness, and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burthens in it."

2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule, *I have done thy commandments*; I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot, upon good grounds, hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments, ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

David's conscience here witnesses for him,

1. That his practices were good. (1.) He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be a superlative love; we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world: and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and extirpate carnal affections. (2.) He kept them, his soul kept them; bodily exercise profits little in religion, we must make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them.

2. That he was governed herein by a good principle; "*Therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thine eye always upon me, all my ways are before thee*; thou knowest every step I take, and strictly observest all I say and do." Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss." Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, Gen. xvii. 1.

22. TAU.

169. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A general petition for audience repeated; *Let my cry come near before thee*; and again, *Let my supplication come before thee*. He calls his prayer his *cry*, which denotes the fervency and vehemence of it; and his *supplication*, which denotes the humility of it; we must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers, and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer, that his supplication might come before God, implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers

have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an Advocate for us.

2. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present. (1.) That God, by his grace, would give him wisdom to conduct himself well under his troubles; *Give me understanding*; he means that wisdom of the prudent, which is, to understand his way; "Give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee." (2.) That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles. *Deliver me*; with the temptation make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. The same general plea to enforce these requests, *according to thy word*. This directs and limits his desires; "Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised, I ask for no other." It also encourages his faith and expectation; "Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?"

171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him *his statutes*. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and, now that he is drawing toward the close of the psalm, he speaks of it as taken for granted. They that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob that they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident that they shall, at length, obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him.

2. The grateful sense he promises to have of that favour; *My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me*. (1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings. (2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to it. All that are taught of God are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) *Therefore* he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. They that pray for God's grace, must aim at God's glory, Eph. i. 12.

172. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Observe here, 1. The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well, that he was ready to own, with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness. 2. The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge; *My tongue shall speak of thy word*; not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others; as that which he was himself full of, (for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak,) and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments, the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking, or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject-matter of our discourse, that it may feed many, and *minister grace to the hearers*.

173. Let thy hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts. 174. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

Here, 1. David prays that divine grace would work for him; *Let thine hand help me*. He finds his own hands not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him would help him; for if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty.

2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads;

(1.) That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice; "*I have chosen thy precepts*. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because, upon trial, I knew no better." Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good, not by chance, but by choice; and those who have thus *chosen* God's precepts, may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services, and under all their sufferings.

(2.) That his heart was upon heaven; *I have longed for thy salvation*. David, when he was got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, "It is good to be here;" but, still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forward in their way to it.

(3.) That he took pleasure in doing his duty; "*Thy law is my delight*. Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world." Those that are cheerful in their obedience may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience: and those that expect God's salvation must take delight in his law, and their hopes must increase their delight.

175. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God; and therefore, 1. He prays that God would give him time to praise him; "*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*; let my life be prolonged, that I may live to thy glory." The reason why a good man desires to live, is, that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, "Let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family;" but, "Let me live, that, in doing this, I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition." When we die, we hope to go to a better world to praise him; and that is more agreeable for us, but here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. *Let my soul live*; let me be sanctified and comforted; these are the life of the soul, and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; "*Let thy judgments help me*; let all ordinances and all providences" (both are God's judgments) "further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, and let them help to fit me for that work."

176. I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession; *I have gone astray*, or wander up and down like a lost sheep. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep, (Luke xv. 4.) so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, Matth. xviii. 12, 13. We are apt to wander like the sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures, and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

2. A believing petition; *Seek thy servant*, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. "Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray;" for David had been himself a tender shepherd. "Lord, own me for one of thine; for though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace." *Seek me*, that is, *Find me*; for God never seeks in vain. *Turn me, and I shall be turned*.

3. An obedient plea; "Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, *I do not forget thy commandments*." Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin, and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die, repenting and praying. Observe here, (1.) It is the character of good people, that they do not *forget God's commandments*, being well-pleased with their convictions, and well-settled in their resolutions. (2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, cannot but own that they have in many instances wandered from it. (3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, if they continue mindful of it, may with a humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

PSALM CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen which are here put together under the title of *songs of degrees*. It is well that it is not material what the meaning of that title should be, for nothing is offered toward the explication of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Four of them are expressly ascribed to David, and one said to be designed for Solomon, and perhaps penned by him; yet Ps. cxvii. and cxix. seem to be of a much later date; some of them are calculated for the closet, (as cxv. cxvi. cxvii.) some for the family, (as cxviii. cxviii.) some for the public assembly, (as cxix. cxix.) and some occasional, as cxix. cxix.: So that, it should seem, they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture that they are so called from their singular excellency; as the song of songs, so the song of degrees, is a most excellent song, in the highest degree. Others, from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments they were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing them. Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others, at so many stages of the people's journey, when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short psalms, (all but one very short, three of them have but three verses a piece,) and that they are placed next to Ps. cxix. which is by much the longest of all. Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short, were sometimes sung altogether, and made, as it were, one psalm, observing only a pause between each; as many steps make one pair of stairs. 2. That, in the composition of them, we frequently meet with the figure they call *climax* or an *ascent*: the preceding word repeated, and they rising to something further, as cxv. *With him that hated peace, I peace*. cxvi. *From whence cometh my help, my help cometh*. He that keepeth thee, shall not slumber, he that keepeth Israel. cxvii. *Within thy gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem is builded*. cxviii. *Until he that have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us*. And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps for one of these reasons they are called *songs of degrees*.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon

occasion of Doeg's accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like *Ps. lii.* which was penned on that occasion; and because the psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. 1. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischief designed him by false and malicious tongues, v. 1, 2. II. He threatens the judgments of God against such, v. 3, 4. III. He complains of his wicked neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, v. 5, 6, 7. In singing this psalm, we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at any time we fall unjustly under the lash of it, that better than we have smarted for it.

A song of degrees.

1. **I**N my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. 2. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 3. What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? 4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Here is,

1. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer; David records his own experience of this.

(1.) He was brought into distress, into great distress, by *lying lips, and a deceitful tongue.* There were those that sought his ruin, and had almost effected it by lying. [1.] By telling lies to him. They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely, and without suspicion, carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, then when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under the colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips. [2.] By telling lies of him. They forged false accusations against him, and *laid to his charge things that he knew not.*

This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent, ones of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives, and all that is dear to them in this world, endangered by false-witness bearing in judgment. David was here in a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

(2.) In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer; *I cried unto the Lord.* Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleases, bridle their tongues. His prayer was, "*Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin.*" He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying, (cxix. 29.) and hated it so heartily in himself, (v. 163.) might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

(3.) He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer; God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be, the Protector of his people from lying lips, xxxvii. 6.

2. The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, v. 3, 4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, xii. 3, 7. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening of his con-

science, if he have any left; "*Consider what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, thou false tongue.*" Surely sinners durst not do as they do, if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them; *Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper;* they will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, (lxix. 7.) *God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded.* They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are *sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty;* for they will pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, (Job vi. 4.) and his wrath is compared to burning *coals of juniper,* which do not flame or crackle, like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long; some say a year round, even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, Rev. xxii. 15.

5. Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! 6. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7. I am for peace: but, when I speak, they are for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven; and some apply the two foregoing verses to this; What shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that lie open to it? What shall a man get by living among such malicious deceitful men? Nothing but *sharp arrows, and coals of juniper,* all the mischiefs of a false and spiteful tongue, lvii. 4. *Woe is me,* says David, that I am forced to dwell among such, *that I sojourn in Mesech and Kedar!* Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesech or Kedar; we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesech and Kedar: as when we would describe an ill neighbourhood, we say, *We dwell among Turks and heathens:* this made him cry out, *Woe is me!*

1. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God. While he was in banishment, he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God's altars; and he cries out, "*Woe is me,* that my sojourning is prolonged, that I cannot get home to my resting-place, but am still kept at a distance!" So some read it. Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God's ordinances, and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God, to want the means of grace, and of communion with God: when they are under a force of that kind, they cannot but cry out, as David here, *Woe is me!*

2. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were, upon many accounts, troublesome to him. He *dwelt in the tents of Kedar,* where the shepherds were probably in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burthen to a good man to be cast into, and kept in, the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from; (like Lot in Sodom; 2 Pet. ii. 8.) to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing, and scratching, and tearing, and who will show the old enmity that

is in the *seed of the serpent*, against the *seed of the woman*. Those that David dwelt with, were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and proclaimed war with it; who might write on their weapons of war, not *Sic sequimur pacem*—*Thus we aim at peace*, but *Sic persequimur*—*Thus we persecute*. Perhaps Saul's court was the Mesecch and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he means that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige, and could not; but the more service he did him, the more exasperated he was against him.

See here, (1.) The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he was a man of war, *I am for peace*, for living peaceably with all men, and unpeaceably with none. *I peace*, so it is in the original; "I love peace, and pursue peace; my disposition is to peace, and my delight is in it. I pray for peace, and strive for peace, will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing, in reason, for peace. *I am for peace*, and have made it to appear that I am so." *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable*.

(2.) The character of the worst of bad men in David's enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed; "*When I speak, they are for war*; and the more forward for war, the more they find me inclined to peace." He spake with all the respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation, spake reason, spake 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 to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries, and for his good words and good works they stoned him. 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*.

PSALM CXXI.

Some call this *the soldier's psalm*, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was jeoparding his life in the high-places of the field, and thus trusted God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it *the traveller's psalm*, (for there is nothing in it of military dangers,) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it, *pro vehiculo*—*for the carriage*, for a good man's convoy and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need not thus appropriate it; wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourages us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection, and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction, in singing this psalm. I. David here assures himself of help from God, v. 1, 2. II. He assures others of it, v. 3. . 8.

A song of degrees.

1. **I** WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5. The LORD is thy keeper; the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. 6. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. 7. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8. The LORD shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm teaches us,

I. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power, and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so, and found the benefit of it. 1. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm: "*Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?* (so some read it.) "*Does my help come from thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth; upon the strength of the hills; upon princes and great men, who, like hills, fill the earth, and mount their heads toward heaven? No; in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains*, Jer. iii. 23. I never expect help to come from them, my confidence is in God only." *We must lift up our eyes above the hills*, so some read it; we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us which they are. 2. We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come; "*My help comes from the Lord*; the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time. If he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt." 3. We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions; "*I will lift up mine eyes to the hills*;" (probably he means the hills on which the temple was built, mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant is, the oracle, and the altars;) "*I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people*, (his presence by promise,) and not only to his common presence." When he was at a distance, he would look toward the sanctuary; (xxviii. 2.—xl. 6.) *from thence cometh our help*, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. *My help cometh from the Lord*, so the word is, (v. 2.) *from before the Lord, or from the sight and presence of the Lord*. "Which (says Dr. Hammond) may refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the Deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and through him with us, for whom, sitting at God's right hand, he constantly maketh intercession." Christ is called the *angel of his presence*, that saved his people, Isa. lxiii. 9. 4. We must encourage our confidence in God with this, that he *made heaven and earth*, and he who did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word's speaking, in a little time, and *all very good*, very excellent and beautiful; and therefore, how great soever our straits and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleases for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleases from hurting his people.

II. To comfort ourselves in God, when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised, that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no mere evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction, but what God sees good for us, and will do us good by.

1. God himself has undertaken to be our Protector; *The Lord is thy Keeper*, v. 5. Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his Guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. These must needs be well kept, that have *the Lord* for their *Keeper*. If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their Keeper.

2. 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, (v. 4.) is thy Keeper, v. 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.

3. He is a wakeful, watchful, Keeper; "*He that keepeth Israel, that keepeth thee, O Israelite, shall neither slumber nor sleep;* he never did, or ever will, for he is never weary; he not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep."

4. He not only protects those whom he is the Keeper of, but he refreshes them; *He is their Shade.* The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being who is infinite Substance, is what he is, in order that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their *Umbra*—their *Shadow*, to keep as close to them as the shadow does to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the *shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, Isa. xxxii. 2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, Cant. ii. 3.

5. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; *he is their Keeper and Shade on their right hand;* so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them, and give them success, Ps. xvi. 8.

He is not only at their right hand, but he will also *keep the feet of his saints*, 1 Sam. ii. 9. He will have an eye upon them in their motions; *he will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it, (lxxiii. 2, 23.) shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endavouring to undermine them by fraud, or overthrow them by force. He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble, and are ready to fall.

7. He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies; (v. 6.) *The sun shall not smite thee, with his heat by day, nor the moon, with her cold and moisture, by night.* The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon, though worshipped by a great part of mankind, are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies; God by them often smites us; but his favour shall interpose so, that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them *night and day*, (Isa. xxvii. 3.) as he kept Israel in the wilderness *by a pillar of cloud by day*, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and *of fire by night*, which probably diffused a gentle warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night; their father Jacob having complained, (Gen. xxxi. 40.) that *by day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night.* It may be understood figurately; "Thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thine enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun, or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night."

8. His protection will make them safe in every respect; "*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil*, the evil of sin, and the evil of trouble. He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten, the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee *from doing evil*, (2 Cor. xiii. 7.) and so far from suffering evil, that, whatever affliction

happens to thee, there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills, shall not hurt."

9. It is the spiritual life especially that God will take under his protection; *He shall preserve thy soul.* All souls are his; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them, by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

10. He will keep us in all our ways; "*He shall preserve thy going out and coming in.* Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward-bound or homeward-bound, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest; going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in," civ. 23.

11. He will continue his care over us *from this time forth and even for evermore.* It is a protection for life, never out of date. "He will be thy Guide *even unto death*, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will *preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom.*" God will protect his church and his saints always, *even to the end of the world.* The Spirit, who is their Preserver and Comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

PSALM CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David's time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this, among other means, was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the Holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, v. 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, v. 3, 5. III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, v. 6, 9. In singing this psalm, we must have an eye to the gospel-church, which is called the *Jerusalem that is from above.*

A song of ...grees of David.

1. **I** WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.
2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Here is, 1. The pleasure which David, and other pious Israelites, took in approaching to, and attending upon, God in public ordinances, v. 1, 2.

(1.) The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he *was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord.* Note, [1.] It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert; that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough, we must *go into the house of the Lord*, to pay our homage to him there, and *not forsake the assembling ourselves together.* [2.] We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. *Let*

us go; not, "Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" but, *We will go also*; (Zech. viii. 21.) not, "Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure;" or, "We will go first, and you shall come after us;" but, "*Let us go together*, for the honour of God, and for our mutual edification and encouragement." We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. [3.] They that rejoice in God will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront, that he was glad of it as a kindness, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord, with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us and take us along with them.

(2.) The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph; (v. 2.) *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem*. They that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their travel. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by, (Zech. iii. 7.) though it be the door-keeper's place, Ps. lxxxiv. 10. We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

2. The praises of Jerusalem, as xlviii. 12.

(1.) It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, out for building. It is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, *compact together*, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be *compact together*. It was a type of the gospel-church, which is *compact together* in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

(2.) It is the holy city; (v. 4.) it is the place where all Israel meet one another; *Thither the tribes go up*, from all parts of the country, as one man, under the character of the tribes of the Lord, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together, [1.] To receive instruction from God; they come to the testimony of Israel, to hear what God has to say to them, and to consult his oracle. [2.] To ascribe the glory to God, to give thanks to the name of the Lord; which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, to give thanks.

(3.) It is the royal city; (v. 5.) *There are set thrones of judgment; therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem*, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interests of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster-hall. 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.

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6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

Here,

1. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem, v. 6, 7. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves, and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be inquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem, can pray for it, which is something more than showing their goodwill, it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel-church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us.

Now, (1.) We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: *They shall prosper that love thee*. We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, or for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man, and man's worship of God: and in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own; for so well does God love the gates of Zion, that he will love all those that do love them; and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

(2.) We are here directed in our prayers for it, and words are put into our mouths, v. 7. *Peace be within thy walls*. He teaches us to pray, [1.] For all the inhabitants in general; all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications, let them never be attacked; or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. [2.] For the princes and rulers especially; *Let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the helm*, and have the direction of public affairs; for if they prosper, it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

2. He resolves, that, whatever others do, he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem; (1.) In his prayers; "*I will now say*, now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, *Peace be within thee*." He did not say, "Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people, that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it, and rule for it:" No; "I will pray for it too." (2.) In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers; "*I will*, to the utmost of my power, *seek thy good*." Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good, we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it.

Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem, it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. It is true; yet he professes that was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem; but it proceeded from the warm regard he had, [1.] To the communion of saints: It is for my brethren and companions' sakes, that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look

upon as my brethren, (so he calls them, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2.) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which hath knit my heart to them. [2.] To the ordinances of God: He had *set his affection to the house of his God*; (1 Chron. xxix. 3.) he took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon; though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only, (v. 1.) but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, I. Their expectation of mercy from God, v. 1, 2. II. Their plea for mercy with God, v. 3, 4. In singing it, we must have our eye up to God's favour, with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach, with a holy contempt.

A song of degrees.

1. **U**NTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2. Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. 3. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

We have here,

I. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, v. 1, 2. Observe,

1. The title here given to God; *O thou that dwellest in the heavens*. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, in prayer, to have an eye to God, as *our Father in heaven*; not that he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the King in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect, and a place of power; he that dwells there, thence beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, *Where is now your God?* But then they can say with comfort, *Our God is in the heavens*. *O thou that sittest in the heavens*, so some; sittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and to that throne injured innocence may appeal.

2. The regard here had to God; the psalmist himself *lifted up his eyes* to him. The eyes of a good man are *ever toward the Lord*; (xxv. 15.) in every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul, to God; especially in trouble, which was the case here. The eyes of the people *waited on the Lord*, v. 2. We find mercy coming toward a people, *when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord*, Zech. ix. 1. The eyes of the body are heaven-ward. *Os homini sublime dedit—To man he gave an erect mien*, to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. *Our eyes wait on the Lord*; the eye of desire and prayer; the begging eye, and the eye of dependence; hope and expectation; the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as *the Lord*, and *our God*, until that he have mercy upon us. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it come.

This is illustrated (v. 2.) by a similitude; Our eyes are to God, *as the eyes of a servant, or hand-maid, to the hand of their master and mistress*. The eyes of a servant are, (1.) To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and show him how he must do it; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (2.) To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master, or their mistress, for their portion of meat in due season, Prov. xxxi. 15. And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. (3.) To his assisting hand. If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? And in the strength of the Lord God we must go forth and go on. (4.) To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work, if he be questioned for what he does, if he be wronged and injured, who should bear him out and right him, but his master that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master, *We are thine, save us*. (5.) To his correcting hand. If the servant have provoked his master to beat him, he does not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, "It is enough, I will not contend for ever." The people of God were now under his rebukes; and whither should they turn but to him that *smote them?* Isa. ix. 13. To whom should they make supplication but to their Judge? They will not do as Hagar did, who ran away from her mistress, when she put some hardships upon her, (Gen. xvi. 6.) but they submit themselves to, and humble themselves under, God's mighty hand. (6.) To his rewarding hand. The servant expects his wages, his *well-done*, from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence *they have their reward*; (Matth. vi. 2.) but true Christians have their eye to God as their Rewarder.

II. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition, (v. 3, 4.) wherein,

1. They sue for mercy; not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own, why he should do for them, but, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us*. We find little mercy with men, their *tender mercies are cruel*, there are *cruel mockings*; but this is our comfort, that *with the Lord there is mercy*, and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, than the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

2. They set forth their grievances; *We are exceedingly filled with contempt*. Reproach is the wound, the burthen, they complain of. Observe, (1.) Who were reproached; "We, who have our eyes up to thee." Those who are owned of God are often despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, *those that are at ease, and the proud*, so as to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned. "Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised." The saints are a peaceable people, and yet are abused; (xxxv. 20.) the excellent ones of the earth, and yet undervalued, Lam. iv. 1, 2. (2.) Who did reproach them; taking the words as we read them, they were the epicures who lived at ease, carnal, sensual, people, Job xii. 5. The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts, and serve their own bellies; and the proud, such as set God himself at defiance, and had a high opinion of themselves; they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them. (3.) To what degree they were reproached; *We are filled*, we are surfeited with it; *Our soul is exceedingly filled with it*. The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say

enough to make them despicable; and they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones. Ps. xlii. 10. Note, [1.] Scorning and contempt have been, and are, and are likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called *persecuting* him; and so it is now, Gal. iv. 29. [2.] In reference to the scorn and contempt of men, it is matter of comfort, that there is mercy with God; mercy to our good names when they are barbarously used: *Hear, O our God, for we are despised.*

PSALM CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people from some very threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin; whether by foreign invasion, or intestine insurrection, is not certain: whatever it was, he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others, with the goodness of God, in making a way for them to escape: to him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself, as conquerors usually do. I. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, v. 1. .5. II. He gives God the glory of their escape, (v. 6, 7.) compared with v. 1, 2. III. He takes encouragement from thence to trust in God, v. 8. In singing this psalm, beside the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

A song of degrees of David.

1. **I**f it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; 2. If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us; 3. Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; 4. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: 5. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

The people of God, being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

1. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say, that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been, the more does the skill of the Physician appear in the cure.

Observe, (1.) Whence the threatening danger came; *Men rose up against us*; creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin: *Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man.* No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion, should seek to swallow us up; but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father; that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose *tender mercies are cruel.* But what was the matter with these men? Why, *their wrath was kindled against us*; (v. 3.) something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.* Their wrath was kindled as fire ready to consume us; they were proud; and *the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.* They were daring in their attempt, *they rose up against us*; rose in rebellion, with a resolution to *swallow us up* alive. (2.) How far it went, and how fatal it had been if it had gone a little further; “We had been devoured as a lamb by a lion; not only slain, but *swallowed up*, so that

there should have been no relics of us remaining; *swallowed up* with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We had been deluged as the low grounds by a land-flood, or the sands by a high spring-tide.” This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents, which bespeak this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest. *The waters had overwhelmed us.* What of us? Why, *the stream had gone over our souls*, our lives, our comforts; all that is dear to us. What waters? Why, *the proud waters.* God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

2. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin; “*The Lord was on our side; and if he had not been so, we had been undone.*” (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 had 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.

6. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

1. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him; (v. 6.) *Blessed be the Lord.* God is the Author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them. We rob him of his due, if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him, because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered, (1.) Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey; *God has 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; God's people 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.* Isaac is saved when he lay ready to be sacrificed. *Jehovah-jireh; in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

2. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers; (v. 8.) *Our help is in the name of the Lord.* David had directed us (cxix. 2.) to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns; *My help is in the name of the Lord*; here, as to the concerns of the public; *Our help is so.* It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made

the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in the times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

PSALM CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet, (Isa. iii. 10, 11.) *Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him. Woe to 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 the prophets. 1. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, 1. They have the promises of a good God, that they shall be fixed, (v. 1.) and safe, (v. 2.) and not always under the hatches, v. 3. 2. They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, v. 4. 3. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, v. 5. Some of the Jewish rabbins are of opinion that it has reference to the days of the Messiah; however, we that are members of the gospel-church may certainly, in singing this psalm, take the comfort of these promises, and the more so, if we stand in awe of the threatening.

A song of degrees.

1. **THEY** that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.* 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever.* 3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may.

Here is, 1. The character of God's people to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter. But those shall have the benefit of them, and may take the comfort of them, (1.) Who are *righteous*, (v. 3.) righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men; for his sake justified and sanctified. (2.) Who *trust in the Lord*, who depend upon his care, and devote themselves to his honour. 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 to appear they do so, by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are raised to God, the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

2. The promises themselves.

(1.) That their hearts shall be established by faith: those minds shall be truly stayed that are stayed on God; *They shall be as mount Zion.* The church in general is called *mount Zion*; (Heb. xii. 22.) and it shall in *this* respect be like *mount Zion*, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons, who trust in God, shall be established; (Ps. cxii. 7.) their faith shall be their fixation, Isa. vii. 9. *They shall be as mount Zion*, which is firm, as it is a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. [1.] *They cannot be removed* by the prince of the power of the air, nor by all his subtlety and strength. *They cannot be removed* from their integrity, nor from their confidence in God. [2.] *They abide for ever* in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

(2.) That, committing themselves to God, they shall be safe, under his protection, from all the insults of their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the *mountains* that *were round about it*, v. 2. (those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy,) such a defence is God's providence to his people! Observe, [1.] The compass of it; *The Lord is round about his people* on every side; there is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy, who goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, Job i. 10. [2.] The continuance of it; *from henceforth even for ever.* Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place, (Job xiv. 18.) but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, (Isa. liv. 10.) nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast *for ever*, (v. 1.) and here to have God *round about them for ever*, intimates, that the promises of the stability and security of God's people will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast *for ever*, shall be as *pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out*; (Rev. iii. 12.) and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be *round about them for ever*.

(3.) That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, v. 3. (1.) It is supposed that the *rod of the wicked* may come, may fall, *upon the lot of the righteous.* The rod of their power may oppress them, the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may fall upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. (2.) It is promised, that, though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there, it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness; so short, that even *with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape.* (3.) It is considered as a reason of this promise, that, if the trouble should continue over-long, the righteous themselves would be in temptation to *put forth their hands to iniquity*, to join with wicked people in their wicked practices; to say as they say, and do as they do. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off, upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See lxxiii. 13, 14. Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength, by the care of his providence, as well as their strength to their trials, by the power of his grace. *Oppression makes a wise man mad*, especially if it continue long; therefore *for the elect's sake* the days shall be shortened, that, whatever goes with their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4. Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. 5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

Here is,

1. The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant; (v. 4.) *Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good.* This teaches us to pray for all good people, to *make sup*

application for all saints; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. They that are as they should be, shall be as they would be, provided they be upright in heart, that they be really as good as they seem to be; with the upright God will show himself upright. He does not say, Do good, O Lord, to them that are perfect, that are sinless and spotless; but, to them that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfort able wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

2. The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters; he does not pray for it, *I have not desired the woeful day, thou knowest*, but he predicts it; *As for those who, having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways*, use indirect ways to prevent trouble, or extricate themselves out of it; or those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse, and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, God shall send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth, with the workers of iniquity, he shall appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, (1.) Sinful ways are crooked ways; sin is the perverting of that which is right. (2.) The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways, out of the right way, will be the same with theirs who have all along walked in them; nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than another, that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away*, all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, *Peace upon Israel*, may be taken as a prayer; God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reckoning with evil-doers. We read them as a promise, *Peace shall be upon Israel*; that is, [1.] When those who have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction, those who faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. [2.] The destruction of those who walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church; when Herod was cut off, *the word of God grew*, Acts xii. 23, 24. [3.] The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the vexation, and will add much to the torment, of those who perish in their wickedness, Luke xiii. 28. Isa. lxx. 13. *My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed.*

PSALM CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress, that this psalm was penned; most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Though Babylon be not mentioned here, as it is, (Ps. cxxxvii.) their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity, both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably, it was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist who returned then, Ezra ii. 41. It being a song of ascents, in which twice the same things are repeated with advancement, (v. 2, 3. and v. 4, 5.) it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. I. Those that were returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, v. 1.-3. II. Those that were yet remaining in captivity are here prayed for, (v. 4.) and encouraged, v. 5, 6. It will be easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church, or our own land, or to the great work of our salvation by Christ.

A song of degrees.

1. **W**HEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like

them that dream. 2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3. The LORD hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them, and they lamented; but, now that their captivity is turned, they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of Providence, and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return.

Here is, 1. The deliverance God had wrought for them; *He turned again the captivity of Zion*. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again, when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was *the Lord's doing*, according to his word many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, The release of Israel is called *the turning again of the captivity of Zion*, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place were; for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, were the most valuable advantage of their return out of captivity.

2. The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly, that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to; "We though ourselves like men that dream, we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still," (as sometimes it had been to the prophets,) "only a representation of it in vision;" as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, Acts xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness before they are aware. *We were like them that are recovered to health*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead, or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world. And the surprise of it put them into an ecstasy and transport of joy, that they could scarcely contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expressions of it; *Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing*. Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. 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.

3. The notice which their neighbours took of it; *They said among the heathen, Jehovah, the God of Israel, has done great things* for that people, such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity, and had triumphed in it, Jer. xxii. 8, 9. Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable; besides, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him, an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power and providence.

4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, v. 3. The heathen were but spectators, and spake of it only as matter of news; they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spake of it as sharers in it. (1.) With application; "He has *done great things for us*, things that we are interested in, and have advantage by." Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ has wrought out, has wrought out for us, *who loved me, and gave himself for me*. (2.) With affection; *whereof we are glad*. The heathen were amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad. While Israel went a whoring from their God, joy was forbidden them; (Hos. ix. 1.) but now that the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reforming people that are, and shall be, the rejoicing people. Observe here, [1.] God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. [2.] God is to be eyed as the Author of all the great things done for the church. [3.] It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. 5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted; they that were come out of captivity were still in distress, even in their own land, (Neh. i. 3.) and many yet remained in Babylon. And therefore they rejoiced with trembling, and bare upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here,

1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance; (v. 4.) "*Turn again our captivity*. Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of the burthens 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. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity, to join with their brethren that were returned, would be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in those countries, which, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, Prov. xxv. 25.

2. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, v. 5, 6.

(1.) Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often, they share in the calamities of humankind, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they *sow* in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; when we suffer ill we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooses to sow in the wet, so we must

improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, 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. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear, and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground, in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus does a good man sow in tears.

(2.) They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but, when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow, shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that *sow to the spirit*, in this vale of tears, *shall of the spirit reap life everlasting*, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted*.

PSALM CXXVII.

This is a family-psalm, as divers before were state-poems, and church-poems. It is entitled (as we read it) *for Solomon*, dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care, and industry, would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read, *a song of Solomon*, who wrote a great many; and they compare it with his Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to show the vanity of worldly care, and how necessary it is that we keep in with God. On him we must depend, 1. For wealth, v. 1, 2. 11. For heirs to leave it to, v. 3-5. In singing this psalm, we must have our eye up unto God for success in all our undertakings, and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us which he makes it to be, and no more.

A song of degrees for Solomon.

1. **E**XCEPT the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. 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. 3. Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. 4. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man: so *are* children of the youth. 5. Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the Divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teaches him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion; pa-

rents, in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions.

We must have an eye to God,

I. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for king's houses are no longer safe than while God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing, and not our own contrivance,

1. For the raising of a family; *Except the Lord build the house*, by his providence and blessing, *they labour in vain*, though ever so ingenious, *that build it*. We may understand it of the material house, except the Lord bless the building; it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted it in defiance of heaven, or Hiel, who built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice, (Hab. ii. 11, 12.) God certainly does not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable, that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and *raise the floor out of the dust*. The best laid project fails, unless God crown it with success: see Mal. i. 4.

2. For the security of a family or a city; for these are specified; if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen, who go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, the mischief of which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent. The guard may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel, or most cautious governor, could not obviate.

3. For the enriching of a family; that is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence, any more than that which is the product of one happy turn; *"It is in vain for you to rise up early and sit up late*, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments, in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world." Usually, those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world, that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares; and they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest, *they eat the bread of sorrows*. It is part of our sentence, that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go further, *all their days they eat in darkness*, Eccl. v. 17. They are continually full of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burthen to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain, except God prosper them, *for riches are not always to men of understanding*, Eccl. ix. 11. They that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably, without this ado. Solomon was called *Jedidiah, Beloved of the Lord*; (2 Sam. xii. 25.) to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a stir, and to say, *I will be king*; Solomon sits still, and, being *beloved of the Lord*, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, (1.) Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world, is a vain and fruitless thing; we weary ourselves for vanity, if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, Hag. i. 6, 9. (2.) Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe, (Ps. iv. 8.) that it is sweet, Jer.

xxx. 25, 26. Then God gives us sleep, as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, (our souls returning to him, and reposing in him as our Rest,) and when we awake, to be still with him, and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He gives his beloved sleep, quietness, and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to *keep ourselves in the love of God*, and then we may be easy, whether we have little or much of this world.

II. In the increase of the family; he shows,

1. That children are *God's gift*, v. 3. If children are withheld, it is God that withholds them (Gen. xxx. 2.) if they are given, it is God that gives them; (Gen. xxxiii. 5.) and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives, contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had; for those that desire children, as an heritage from the Lord, must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife; (Mal. ii. 15.) *therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God*. But *they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase*. Children are a heritage, and a reward; and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burthens; for he that sends mouths will send meat, if we trust in him. Obed-edem had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, 1 Chron. xxvi. 5. *Children are a heritage for the Lord*, as well as from him; they are *my children*, (says God,) *which thou hast borne unto me*; (Ezek. xvi. 20.) and then they are most our honour and comfort, when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family: *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man*, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by the time they need their service. Or rather, children who are themselves young; they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family that has a large stock of children, is like a quiver full of arrows, of different sizes we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly *speak with his enemy in the gate* in judgment; in battle he needs not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, 1 Sam. ii. 4, 5. Observe here, *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 afterward, when they are gone abroad into 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 gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

PSALM CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that, we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this, we are taught that the only way to obtain that blessing which will make our families comfortable, is, to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. They that do so, in general, shall be blessed, v. 1, 2, 4. In particular, I. They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments, v. 2. II. Their relations shall be agreeable, v. 3. III. They shall live to see their families brought up, v. 6. IV. They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition, v. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth, That religion and

piety are the best friends to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so, and that we have found it so, and encouraging ourselves and others with it.

A song of degrees.

1. **B**LESSED is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.
2. For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thy house: thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.
4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.
5. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

It is here showed that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

I. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth, that *they who are truly holy are truly happy*. They whose blessed state we are here assured of, are such as *fear the Lord, and walk in his ways*; such as have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart, the tenor of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God, if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways, and not trifling in them or drawing back. Such are blessed, (v. 1.) and shall be blessed, v. 4. God blessed them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness, arising from this blessing, is here secured, 1. To all the saints universally; *Blessed is every one that fears the Lord*, whoever he be; in every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world, if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him. 2. To such a saint in particular; thus shall the man be blessed; not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests. 3. We are here encouraged to apply it to ourselves; (v. 2.) "*Happy shalt thou be; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God, and walk in his ways*. Happy shalt thou be; that is, *It shall be well with thee*; whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity." It is asserted, (v. 4.) with a note commanding attention, *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed*; 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.

II. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That, by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood, and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease, without care or pains, but, *Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands*. Here is a double promise, (1.) That they shall have something to do, (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life,) and shall have health and strength, and capacity of mind, to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for ne-

cessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy, as it is a duty, *with quietness to work and eat our own bread*, 2 Thess. iii. 12. (2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get; others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies; God will not blast it and blow upon it, as he did; (Hag. i. 9.) and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family-relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort. (1.) *The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house*, not only as a spreading vine, which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine, which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, Judg. ix. 13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think (because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites) it was the *tree of knowledge* itself. The wife's place is the *husband's house*; there her business lies, and that is her castle; *Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold, in the tent*; where should she be else? Her place is *by the sides of the house*, not under foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer: if she be so, she is but *as the grass upon the house-top*, in the next psalm; but *on the side of the house*, being a rib out of the side of the man; she shall be a loving wife, as the vine, which cleaves to the house-side, an obedient wife, as the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom, and righteousness, and good management, the *branches of which run over the wall*, (Gen. xlix. 22. Ps. lxxx. 11.) *like a fruitful vine*, not cumbering the ground, or bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. (2.) *The children shall be as olive-plants*, likely in time to be olive-trees, and, though *wild by nature*, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its *root and fatness*, Rem. xi. 17. It is pleasant to parents, who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it; to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them; Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity, that *his children were about him*, Job xxix. 5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk; to have them in health, craving food, and not phsyic; to have them *like olive-plants*, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God has promised, and which they pray for; *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. *Blessings out of Zion* are the best blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace, Ps. xx. 2.

4. That they shall live long, to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations; "*Thou shalt see thy children's children*", as Joseph, Gen. i. 23. Thy family shall be built up and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it." *Children's children*, if they be good children, are the crown of old men, (Prov. xvii. 6.) who are apt to be fond of their grand-children.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which ever

man who fears God is no less concerned for than for the prosperity of his own family. "Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem as long as thou livest, though thou livest long; and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and imbibed by public troubles." A good man can have little comfort in seeing his *children's children*, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel.

It is not certain when it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. I. They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers, out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, v. 1.-4. II. They look forward with a believing prayer for, and prospect of, the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, v. 5.-8. In singing this psalm, we may apply it both ways to the Gospel Israel, which, like the Old Testament Israel, has weathered many a storm, and is still threatened by many enemies.

A song of degrees.

1. **M**ANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me. 3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back; they made long their furrows. 4. The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God, in its several ages, is here spoken of, or rather, here speaks, as one single person, now old and gray-headed, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And, upon the review, it is found,

1. That the church has been often greatly distressed by its enemies on earth; *Israel may now say*, "I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a *speckled bird*, pecked at by *all the birds round about*," Jer. xii. 9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins, it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. For these, *many a time have they afflicted me from my youth*. Note, God's people have always had many enemies; and the state of the church, from its infancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges, then they were afflicted, and from thenceforward more or less. The gospel-church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflicted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under, v. 3. *The ploughers ploughed upon my back*. We read (cxxxv. 3.) *of the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous*, where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the *plough* of the wicked *upon the back of the righteous*, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in these places may be said to be *crossed*; the sense, however, of both is the same, and is too plain, that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously. They tare them as the husbandman tears the ground with his ploughshare, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to *wear out the saints of the Most High*,

as the ground is worn out that had been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that, their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so; (Isa. x. 7.) *they made long their furrows*, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many, by the *furrows* they made on the backs of God's people, understand the stripes they gave them. *The cutters cut upon my back*, so they read it. The saints have often had *trials of cruel scourgings*, (probably the captives had,) and *cruel mockings*, (for we read of the scourge, or lash of the tongue, Heb. xi. 36.) and so it was fulfilled in Christ, who *gave his back to the smiters*, Isa. l. 6. Or it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel; *Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field*, Mic. iii. 12.

2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

(1.) The enemies' projects have been defeated; they have afflicted the church, in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point; many a storm it has weathered, many a shock, and many a brunt, it has borne, and yet is in being; *They have not prevailed against me*. One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

(2.) 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; 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.

These words, *The Lord is righteous*, may refer either to the distresses or to the deliverances of the church. [1.] *The Lord is righteous*, in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was *just in all that was brought upon them*, Neh. ix. 33. [2.] *The Lord is righteous*, in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a *recompense*, 2 Thess. i. 6.

5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion: 6. Let them be as the grass *upon* the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up; 7. Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom. 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.

The psalmist, having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm as Deborah did her song, *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, Judg. v. 31.

1. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers, that have an antipathy to religion and religious people,

that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world.

2. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be *confounded*, and *turned back* with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprise and expectation; *Let them all be confounded*, is as much as, *They shall be all confounded*. The confusion imprecated, and predicted, is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall *wither as the grass upon the house-top*. As men, they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, Isa. li. 12. But, as they are enemies to Zion, they are so certainly marked for ruin, that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as *the grass on the house-tops*, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

(1.) It perishes quickly, it *withers before it grows up* to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner does it wither. *It withers before it is plucked up*, so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God.

(2.) It is of no use to any body; nor are *they* anything but the unprofitable burthens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman does by the grass on his house-top. *Their harvest will be a heap in the day of grief*, Isa. xvii. 11.

3. No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, v. 8. Observe, (1.) It has been an ancient and laudable custom not only to salute, and wish a good day to, strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest-labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers, (Ruth ii. 4.) *The Lord be with you*. We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good-will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculatio, if it comes from a devout and upright heart. (2.) Religious expressions, being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation, which savoured of devotion; for holy things must not be jested with. (3.) It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we *wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds*, 2 John xi. When it is said, None will bless them, and show them respect, more is implied, namely, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and woe to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. *I cursed his habitation*, Job v. 3.

PSALM CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have sometimes been made use of by penitents, upon their admission into the church; in singing it, we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresses, I. His desire toward God, v. 1, 2. II. His repentance before God, v. 3, 4. III. His attendance upon God, v. 5, 6. IV. His expectations from God, v. 7, 8. And as in water face answers to face, so does the heart of one humble penitent to another.

A song of degrees.

1. **O**UT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2. LORD, hear my

voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand? 4. But *there is forgiveness with thee*, that thou mayest be feared.

In these verses, we are taught,

1. Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, v. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the *depths*, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do; in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God, and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in, in this world; Jeremiah's, out of the dungeon, Daniel's, out of the den, and Jonah's, out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower, and to recover us out of the *horrible pit, and miry clay*, xl. 1, 2.

2. While we continue calling upon God, to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for, (v. 2.) *Lord, hear my voice*, my complaint and prayer, and *let thine ears be attentive* to the voice both of my afflictions and of my supplications.

3. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God, as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences; (v. 3.) *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* His calling God *Lord* twice, in so few words, *Jah* and *Adonai*, is very emphatical, and intimates a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty, and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, (1.) To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities, and is liable to be animadverted upon. (2.) To own the power and justice of God, which is such, that, if he should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, there were no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great; greatly aggravated, and very provoking; and then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour, and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist, or bear up under, his avenging hand. (3.) Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

4. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that, when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, v. 4. Here is, (1.) God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner; *But there is forgiveness with thee*. It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is *forgiveness with him*, for that is what we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin, he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be entreated, and swift to show

mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. *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. (2.) Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it; *There is forgiveness with thee*, not that thou mayest be made bold with, and presumed upon, but *that thou mayest be feared*; in general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men, who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults. But this encourages us to come into his service, that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanour; no, not for any, if we truly repent. This does in a special manner invite those who have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance; (Joel ii. 13. Matth. iii. 2.) and particularly, we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy; (Hos. iii. 5.) *They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness*; and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God, when we make it the object of our holy fear.

5. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6. My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning; *I say, more than they that watch for the morning*. 7. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is mercy*, and with him is plenteous redemption. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Here, 1. The psalmist engages himself to trust in God, and to wait for him, v. 5, 6. Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents: "*I wait for the Lord*"; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. *My soul doth wait*; I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is *for the Lord* that *my soul waits*, for the gifts of his grace, and the operations of his power." (2.) The ground of that dependence; *In his word do I hope*. We must hope for that only, which he has promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; and we must hope for it, because he has promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. (3.) The degree of that dependence; *more than they that watch for the morning*; who are, [1.] Well assured that the morning will come; and so am I, that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. [2.] Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels that keep guard upon the walls, they that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day, wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly does this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and 'he visits of his grace; and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus: "*My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards the morning, the guards in the morning*;" and gives this sense of it, "To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul, be-

fore thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice."

2. He encourages all the people of God, in like manner, to depend upon him, and trust in him; *Let Israel hope in the Lord, and wait for him*; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who *surnameshimself by the name of Israel*, Isa. xlv. 5. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him, (v. 7, 8.) for two reasons: (1.) Because the light of nature discovers to us that *there is mercy with him*, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, and the Father of mercies. *Mercy is with him*; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. (2.) Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that *there is redemption with him*, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fullness of time; it was in the beginning hid in God. See here, [1.] The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin; and therefore can be no other than that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the Author of; for it is *he that saves his people from their sins*, (Matth. i. 21.) *that redeems them from all iniquity*, (Tit. ii. 14.) and *turns away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning, and from the commanding, power of sin. [2.] The riches of this redemption; it is *plenteous redemption*; there is an all sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and there is a *plenteous redemption*. [3.] The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong; *He shall redeem Israel*; *Israel according to the spirit*; all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are *Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile*.

PSALM CXXXI.

This psalm is David's profession of humility; humbly made, with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain-glory. It is probable enough that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the calumnies of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious aspiring man, who, under pretence of a divine appointment, sought the kingdom, in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God, that, on the contrary, I. He aimed at nothing high or great, v. 1. II. He was very easy in every condition which God allotted him; (v. 2.) and therefore, III. He encourages all good people to trust in God as he did, v. 3. Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms, that there are many who cannot say, *My heart is not haughty*, &c. It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we ought to be; with repentance that we have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

A song of degrees of David.

1. **L**ORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. 2. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. 3. Let Israel hope in the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:

I. Consciousness of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him, that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under, and the temptations he was in.

1. He aimed not at a *high condition*, nor was he

desirous of making a figure in the world, but, if God had so ordered, could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride, (1 Sam. xvii. 28.) but the charge was groundless and unjust; God, who searches the heart, knew,

(1.) That he had no concealed opinion of himself, or his own merits; *Lord, my heart is not haughty*. Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God, reigning in the heart, will subdue all inordinate self-love.

(2.) That 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; (Prov. vi. 17.) but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.

(3.) That he did not employ himself in things above his station; *in things too great or too high for him*. He did not employ himself in studies too high; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written. To know God and our duty, is learning sufficiently high for us. He did not employ himself in affairs too great; he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier; for, when his brethren went to the wars, he stayed at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which does not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high, for men; and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame, that affect undue honours.

2. He was well-reconciled to every condition that God placed him in; (v. 2.) *I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother*. As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so, since God had appointed him to it, he had not behaved insolently towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but, (1.) He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weaning, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's disposal, as the child at the disposal of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour has taught us humility by this comparison; (Math. xviii. 3.) we must *become as little children*. (2.) He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world as a child is to the breast, when it is thoroughly weaned from it. *I have levelled and quieted myself*, (so Dr. Hammond reads it,) *as a child that is weaned*. This intimates that our hearts are naturally as lealous of worldly things as the babe is of the breast, and in like manner relish them, cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But, by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us. The child is perhaps cross and fretful while it is in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two it is forgotten, the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus does a gracious soul quiet

itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens; lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves, and all about us; then our souls are *as a weaned child*.

II. Confidence in God; and this David recommends to all the Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of it; (v. 3.) *Let Israel hope in the Lord*, and let them continue to do so, *from henceforth and for ever*. 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*.

PSALM CXXXII.

It is probable that this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge his father gave him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, &c. Having fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done. I. He had built this house for the honour and service of God; and when he brings the ark into it, the token of God's presence, he desires God himself would come and take possession of it, v. 8, 10. With these words Solomon concluded his prayer, 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. II. He had built it in pursuance of the orders he had received from his father, and therefore his pleas to enforce these petitions refer to David. 1. He pleads David's piety towards God, v. 1-7. 2. He pleads God's promise to David, v. 11-18. The former introduces his petition, the latter follows it as an answer to it. In singing this psalm, we must have a concern for the gospel church, as the temple of God, and a dependence upon Christ, as David our King, in whom the mercies of God are sure mercies.

A song of degrees.

1. **L**ORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions; 2. How he swore unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; 3. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; 4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids, 5. Until I find out a place for the LORD, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. 6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood. 7. We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool. 8. Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength. 9. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. 10. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses, we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name. Observe,

I. What he pleads: two things.

1. That what he had done was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. 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 co-

venant;" (as Moses prayed, Exod. xxxii. 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, 2 Sam. vii. 2. *Remember all his humility and meekness*; so some read it; all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession, of their afflictions, their services, and their sufferings; of God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness, the care they took of, and the many prayers they put up for, those that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ, the Son of David, and to all his afflictions; "*Lord, remember the covenant made with him, and the satisfaction made by him; Remember all his offerings*, (Ps. xx. 3.) all his sufferings."

He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe,

(1.) Whom he bound himself to; *to the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob*. Vows are to be made to God, who is a Party as well as a Witness. The Lord is the mighty One of Jacob; Jacob's God, and a mighty One, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty One.

(2.) What he bound himself to do; *to find out a place for the Lord*, for the ark, the token of his presence. He had observed in the law frequent mention of the *place that God would choose to put his name there*, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown, there was no such place, Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity. "Well," says David, "I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of *habitation for the mighty One of Jacob*, a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it."

(3.) How intent he was upon it; he would not settle in his house; nay, he would not sleep in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some head, v. 3, 4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow, that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather, where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence with which he was punished for numbering the people; (1 Chron. xxii. 1.) *Then David said, This is the house of the Lord*. And perhaps it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence; *for we know not what a day may bring forth*. Especially in the great work of conversion to God; we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life, till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

2. That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were in-

quisitive after the ark; for they lamented its obscurity, 1 Sam. vii. 2. *They heard of it at Ephratah*, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, there they were told it had been, but it was gone; they *found it at last in the fields of the wood*, in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies *the city of woods*. Thence all Israel fetched it, with great solemnity, in the beginning of David's reign, (1 Chron. xiii. 6.) so that in building this house for the ark, Solomon had gratified all Israel; they needed not to go about to seek the ark any more, they now knew where to find it. (2.) They were resolved to attend it; "*Let us but have a convenient place, and we will go into his tabernacle*, to pay our homage there; *we will worship at his foot-stool*, as subjects and supplicants; which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, *in the days of Saul*," 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

II. What he prays for, v. 8-10.

1. That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in, this temple which he had built. *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest*, and let this be it, *thou, even the ark of thy strength*, the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

2. That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty; *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness*: let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute. "*They are thy priests*, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee, if they be not clothed with righteousness."

3. That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them; *Let thy saints shout for joy*; they did so when the ark was brought into the city of David; (2 Sam. vi. 15.) they will do so when the *priests are clothed with righteousness*. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are *helpers of your joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24.

4. That Solomon's own prayer, upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple, might be accepted of God; "*Turn not away the face of thine anointed*; deny me not the things I have asked of thee; send me not away ashamed. He pleads, (1.) That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great Anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's Anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. (2.) That he was the son of David; "For his sake do not deny me;" and this is the Christian's plea; "For the sake of Christ," (our David,) "*in whom thou art well-pleased*, accept me." He is David, whose name signifies *beloved*; and we are made accepted in the Beloved. He is God's Servant, whom he *upholds*, Isa. xlii. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but, for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood; let both ministers and people do their duty.

11. The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. 12. If thy children will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. 13. For the LORD hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation

14. *This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* 15. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

These are precious promises, confirmed by an oath, that the heirs of them might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged in the prayer, or as answers returned to the prayer; believers know how to make use of the promises both ways; with them to speak to God, and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion's hill are as applicable to the gospel-church, as these concerning David's seed are to Christ; and therefore both pleadable by us, and very comfortable to us. Here is,

1. The choice God made of David's house, and Zion hill. Both were of divine appointment.

1. God chose David's family for the royal family, and confirmed his choice by an oath, v. 11, 12. David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, will not turn from it.* Did David swear to the Lord, that he would find him a house? (v. 2.) The Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David refers, (1.) To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins; *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*, which was fulfilled in Solomon; David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 Kings i. 48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever; *If thy children, in full wing ages, will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them;* God himself engages to teach them, and he did his part; they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects, is, that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then, *their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.* Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs *quandiu se bene gesserint—during good behaviour.* The issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. (2.) To an everlasting Successor, a King that should descend from his loins, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us, that David himself so understood it; (Acts ii. 30.) *He knew 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;* and in the fullness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. He did fulfil the condition of the promise, he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him, and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good; he, and the children God has given him, all believers, shall sit upon the throne for evermore, Rev. iii. 21.

2. God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, v. 13, 14. He chose the mount Zion which he loved;

(lxxviii. 68.) he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, *This is my rest for ever*, and not my residence for a time, as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David, he chose it for the royal city, because God chose it for the holy city. God said, *Here will I dwell*, and therefore David said, *Here will I dwell*, for he adhered to his principle, *It is good for me to be near to God.* Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel-church, which is called mount Zion, (Heb. xii. 22.) and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field, but the church of Christ is the house of the living God, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, are the comfort and joy of all its members.

11. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house, and Zion hill. Whom God chooses he will bless.

1. God, having chosen Zion hill, promises to bless that, (1.) With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness has the promise of them, v. 15. The earth shall yield her increase; where religion is set up, there shall be provision, and in blessing God will bless it; (lxxvii. 6.) he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further; *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised that God will take care even of them. [1.] By his providence they shall be kept from wanting, they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church must take care that they be not neglected, Acts vi. 1. [2.] By his grace, they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul, in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

(2.) With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness; (v. 16.) which is an answer to the prayer, v. 9. [1.] It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; it is here promised that God will clothe them with salvation; not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both save themselves and those that hear them, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. [2.] It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

2. God, having chosen David's family, here promises to bless that also with suitable blessings.

(1.) Growing power; *There, in Zion, will I make the horn of David to bud*, v. 17. The royal dig

nity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the *Horn of salvation*, denoting a plentiful and powerful salvation, which God has 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; (lxxv. 10.) 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; (xviii. 28.) that lamp is likely to burn bright 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*, who 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 great day, *to everlasting shame and contempt*.

(4.) Universal prosperity; *Upon himself shall his crown flourish*; his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, 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*, (Prov. xxvii. 24.) but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as *fade not away*.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium on unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we should think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace. Some conjecture that David penned it upon occasion of the union between the tribes, when they all met unanimously to make him king. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, lesser and larger, civil and sacred. Here is, I. The doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, v. 1. II. The illustration of that doctrine, in two similitudes, v. 2, 3. III. The proof of it, in a good reason given for it; (v. 3.) and then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do in singing it, provoking ourselves and one another to holy love. The contents of this psalm, in our Bibles, are short, but very proper; it is the benefit of the communion of saints.

A song of degrees of David.

1. **BEHOLD**, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that run down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;* 3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

Here see, 1. What it is that is commended; *brethren's dwelling together in unity*; not only not quarrelling, and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each other's welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder and at a distance from each other; that indeed may prevent enmity and strife, (Gen. xiii.

9.) but the goodness and pleasantness are, *for brethren to dwell together*, and so *to dwell in unity*; *to dwell even as one*, so some read it; as having one heart, one soul, one interest. David had many sons by many wives; probably, he penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love one another; which, if they had done, much of the mischief that arose in his family had been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests, during the government of the Judges, and it was often of bad consequence; but now that they were united under one common head, he would have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantage; especially since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for public worship, and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

2. How commendable it is; *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!* It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort; it is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. *Behold, how good!* We cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. *Behold*, it is a rare thing, and therefore admirable. *Behold*, and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! *Behold*, it as an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts. *Behold*, it as an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

3. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated. (1.) It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours, to the great delight of all the by-standers, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high priest, so plentifully, that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment, v. 2. [1.] This was holy ointment; such must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love them that are begotten, *for his sake that begat*, 1 John v. 1. [2.] This ointment was a composition made up by a divine dispensatory; God appointed the ingredients and the quantities. Thus believers are *taught of God to love one another*; it is a grace of his working in us. [3.] It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is, in the sight of God, of great price; and that is precious indeed, which is so in God's sight. [4.] It was grateful, both to Aaron himself and to all about him; so is holy love; it is like *ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart*. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was *anointed above his fellows*. [5.] Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not, we are nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

(2.) It is fructifying; it is profitable as well as pleasing; it is *as the dew*; it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions, as the evening dews cool the air and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good, it moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, *malice and bitterness* unfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. ii. 1. It is *as the dew of Hermon*, a common hill; for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies; and *as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion*, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies. Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. It is said of the dew

that it *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mic. v. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, that is publican's love; but should go before it, th it is divine love.

4. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love. Loving people are blessed people. For,

(1.) They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. *There*, where brethren dwell together in unity, *the Lord commands the blessing*, a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessings, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings, according to the promise, are commanded blessings, for he has commanded *his covenant for ever*. Blessings that take effect, are commanded blessings, *for he speaks and it is done*.

(2.) They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on them that dwell in love, is, *life for evermore*; that is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, shall have the God of love and peace with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

PSALM CXXXIV.

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and if they were at any time sung all together in the temple-service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is, to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. I. In the two first verses, the priests or Levites, who sat up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord, are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. II. In the last verse, they who were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest, or the captain of the guard. Or thus; they who did that service, did mutually exhort one another, and pray for one another. In singing this psalm, we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

A song of degrees.

BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. 3. The LORD, that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a two-fold blessing:

1. Our blessing God; that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, v. 1, 2.

(1.) It is a call to the *Levites* to do it; they were the *servants of the Lord* by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Numb. iii. 6, &c. Some of them did *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains, there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar, nor the lamps in the candlestick, went out. Probably, it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that *departed not from the temple night or day*, Luke ii. 37. Now these are here called upon to *bless the Lord*. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must re-

deem time for holy exercises and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of good husbandry, to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable demand to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. They who stood *in the house of the Lord*, must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them therefore *bless the Lord*; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them *lift up their hands* in the doing of it, in token of their lifting up of their hearts. *Let them lift up their hands in holiness*, so Dr. Hammond reads it; or in sanctification; as it is fit when they lift them up *in the sanctuary*; and let them remember, that when they were appointed to watch before they went in to minister, they were thereby taught to *lift up holy hands* in prayer and praise.

(2.) It is a call to us to do it, who, as Christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa. lxvi. 21. We are the *servants of the Lord*, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him, even by night we are under his eye, and have access to him. Let us therefore *bless the Lord*, and again bless him; think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us *lift up our hands* in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with *Behold!* a note commanding attention. Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and conduct yourselves accordingly.

2. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, v. 3. Whether it is the watchmen's blessing their captain, or the Levites' blessing the high priest, or whoever 'was their chief, as many take it, because it is in the singular number, *The Lord bless thee*; or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many, *The Lord bless thee*, each of you in particular, thee and thee: you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you; is not material. We may learn, (1.) That we need desire no more to make us happy, than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. (2.) That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. (3.) It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he who *made heaven and earth*, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his disposal, the upper and nether springs. (4.) We ought to beg these blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, *The Lord bless me*, but, *The Lord bless thee*; thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good will also to others. We must pray for them that exhort us. Though *the less is blessed of the greater*, (Heb. vii. 7.) yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

PSALM CXXXV.

This is one of the Hallelujah psalms; this is the title of it, and that is the *Amen* of it, both its alpha and its omega.

I. It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the *servants of the Lord* to praise him, as in the foregoing psalm, v. 1. 3. II. It goes on to furnish us with matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, v. 4. 2. As the God of gods, v. 5. 3. As the God of the whole world, v. 6, 7. 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, v. 8. 11. 5. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them, and what he would do, v. 12. 14. 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, v. 15. 18. III. It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concerned to praise God, v. 19. 21. In singing this psalm, our hearts must be filled, as well as our mouths, with the high praises of God.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD. 2. Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, 3. Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for *it* is pleasant. 4. For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Here is,

I. The duty we are called to; *to praise the Lord, to praise his name; praise him, and again praise him.* We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself, and has done for others; take all occasions to speak well of God, and to give his truths and ways a good word.

2. The persons that are called upon to do this; *the servants of the Lord, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, v. 2.* They have most reason to praise God, who are admitted to the privileges of his house; and they see most reason, who there behold his beauty, and taste his bounty; from them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places. Who should praise him, if they do not?

3. The reasons why we should praise God.

(1.) Because he whom we are to praise is *good*; and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that; his goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory.

(2.) Because the work is its own wages; *Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant.* It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste for the pleasures of sin.

(3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people; (*v. 4.*) *The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him for a name and a praise;* (Jer. xiii. 11.) and therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. *Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people;* (Exod. xix. 5.) they are his *Segullah*, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, *precious in his sight, and honourable.* For this distinguishing, surprising, favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy, ungrateful, people under the sun.

5. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods. 6. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that did he* in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. 7. He caused the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings for the rain: he bringeth the wind out of his treasures. 8. Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast. 9. *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10. Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12. And

gave their land for a heritage, a heritage unto Israel his people. 13. Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. 14. For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our *cheerful* praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God, as the proper matter of our *awful* praises; and on this he is most large, because this we are less forward to consider.

I. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness; (*v. 5.*) *The Lord is great*; great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place. He asserts it with assurance, "I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it; I am sure of it, I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul." He asserts it with a holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him; he is not only above any god, but above all gods, infinitely above them, betwixt him and them there is no comparison.

II. He proves him to be a great God, by the greatness of his power, *v. 6.* 1. He has an absolute power, and may do what he will; *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he*, and none could control him, or say unto him, *What doest thou?* He does what he pleases, because he pleases, and gives not account of any of his matters. 2. He has an almighty power, and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder. 3. This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he doeth what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do nothing; but our God can do any thing, and does do every thing.

III. He gives instances of his great power.

1. In the kingdom of nature, *v. 7.* All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him. (1.) It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe; the heat of the sun raises them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God, that *nothing is hid from the heat of the sun*, xix. 6. *He causes the vapours to ascend* (not only unhelped, but unseen, by us) from the earth, from the ends of the earth, that is, from the seas, by which the earth is surrounded. (2.) It is he who, out of those vapours so raised, forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage in fruitful showers. (3.) Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he *makes lightnings for the rain*, by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here are fire and water thoroughly reconciled by Divine Omnipotence. They come together, and yet the water does not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, 1 Kings xviii. 38. (4.) The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them, that we cannot tell whence they come or whither they go, but God *brings them out of his treasures* with as much exactness and design as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

2. In the *kingdoms of men*; and here he mentions the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion, and irresistible power, (1.) In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called *tokens and wonders*, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them. They were *sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants*, his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his sons, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born, both of men and cattle, was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. (2.) In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, v. 10. They that were in possession of the land designed for Israel, had all possible advantages for keeping possession; the people were numerous, and warlike, and confederate against Israel; they were great nations. Yet if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had *mighty kings*, and yet they were all smitten and slain; *Sihon and Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan*, v. 10, 11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God, when the time, the set time, for it, is come. (3.) In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleases, gave Canaan to be a heritage to Israel his people. It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession; and it descended as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and with good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

IV. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. 1. Of his glory; (v. 13.) *Thy name, O God, endures for ever*. God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences. *What God doeth, it shall be for ever*, Eccl. iii. 14. His name endures for ever, in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to Exod. iii. 15. where, when God had called himself the *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, he adds, *This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*. God is, and will be, always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is and will be, the same to him, a thankful, praising, people; and thus his name *endures for ever*. 2. Of his grace; he will be kind to his people. (1.) He will plead their cause against others that contend with them; he will judge his people, he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. (2.) He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them, he will be entreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them; he will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36.

15. The idols of the heathen *are silver and gold, the work of men's hands*. 16. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 17. They have ears, but they hear not; neither

is there *any breath in their mouths*. 18. They that make them are like unto them *so is every one that trusteth in them*. 19. Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: 20. Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21. Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The design of these verses is,

1. To arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worships, by showing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, cxv. 4, &c. (1.) They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them; and then, what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the *work of men's hands*, and the deities that were supposed to inform them, were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination. (2.) They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no act of the *animal* life. They could neither *see*, nor *hear*, nor *speak*, nor so much as *breathe*; and therefore to make them with *eyes*, and *ears*, and *mouths*, and *nostrils*, was such a jest, that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to expect any good from such mock-deities. (3.) Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were: both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, v. 18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping of a God that is a Spirit, make us spiritual and wise.

2. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, v. 19-21. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations that worship idols is, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better. Therefore, (1.) Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them; *Bless the Lord*, and again, *bless the Lord*. In the parallel place, (cxv. 9-11.) by way of inference, from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us, is, *to trust in the Lord*; here, *to bless him*; by putting our trust in God, we give glory to him, and they that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him: the *house of Israel*, the nation in general; the *house of Aaron*, and the *house of Levi*, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that *feared the Lord*, though they were not of the house of Israel. (2.) Let God have the glory of all; *Blessed be the Lord*. The tribute of praise arises *out of Zion*; all God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he *dwells in Jerusalem*, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. The condescensions of his grace, in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

PSALM CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composition of it; for the latter half of each verse is the same, repeated throughout the psalm, for *his mercy endureth for ever*, and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed that such burthens, or *keepings*, as we call them, add very much to the beauty of a song, and help to make it

moving and affecting; nor can any verse contain more weighty matter, or more worthy to be thus repeated, than this, that *God's mercy endureth for ever*; and the repetition of it here twenty-six times, intimates, 1. That God's mercies to his people are thus repeated and drawn, as it were, with a *continuando* from the beginning to the end, with a progress and advance in *infinity*. 2. That in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still, the same now that it has been, and enduring for ever, the same always that it is. 3. That the everlasting continuance of the mercy of God is very much his honour, and that which he glories in, and very much the saints' comfort, and that which they glory in. It is that which therefore our hearts should be full of, and greatly affected with, so that the most frequent mention of it, instead of cloying us, should raise us the more, because it will be the subject of our praise to all eternity. This most excellent sentence, that *God's mercy endureth for ever*, is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the signal tokens of divine acceptance with which God owned the singing of it, both in Solomon's time, (2 Chron. v. 13, when they sang these words, for his *mercy endureth for ever*, the house was filled with a cloud,) and in Jehoshaphat's time; (when they sang these words, God gave them victory, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22.) which should make us love to sing, *His mercies sure do still endure, eternally*. We must praise God, I. As great and good in himself, v. 1..3. II. As the Creator of the world, v. 5..9. III. As Israel's God and Saviour, v. 10..22. IV. As our Redeemer, v. 23, 24. V. As the great Benefactor of the whole creation, and God over all, blessed for evermore, v. 25, 26.

1. **O** GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever*. 2. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 3. O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 4. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 5. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 6. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 7. To him that made great lights: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 8. The sun to rule by day: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 9. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his *mercy endureth for ever*.

The duty we are here again and again called to, is, to *give thanks*, to *offer the sacrifice of praise continually*, not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but the *fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name*, Heb. xiii. 15. We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent, as to *give thanks*; for it is the will of God that we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven.

Now here observe,

1. Whom we must give thanks to; to him that we receive all good from, to the *Lord*, Jehovah, Israel's God, (v. 1.) *the God of gods*, the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended deities are and shall be conquered; (v. 2.) *to the Lord of lords*, the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the Stay and Supporter of all supports, v. 3. In all our adorations, we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as incontestably and uncontrollably supreme.

2. What we must give thanks for; not as the Pharisee, that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own praise; *God, I thank thee*, that I am so and so; but directing them all to God's glory.

(1.) We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy; (v. 1.) *Give thanks to the Lord*, not only because he doeth good, but because he is good; all the streams must be run up to the fountain; not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

(2.) We must give God thanks for the instances of his power and wisdom. In general, (v. 4.) *he alone doeth great wonders*. The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance wonderful, being put in execution by infinite power. He alone doeth marvellous things; none besides can do such things, and he doeth them without the assistance or advice of any other.

More particularly, [1.] He made the heavens, and stretched them out, and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences; as long as the heavens endure, the mercy of God endures in them, v. 5. [2.] He raised the earth out of the waters, when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man still endures; (v. 6.) *for the earth hath he given to the children of men*, and all its products. [3.] Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, v. 7..9. These are called the *great lights*, because they appear so to us, for, otherwise, astronomers tell us, that the moon is less than many of the stars, but, being nearer to the earth, it seems much greater. They are said to *rule*, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, Luke xxii. 25. But the empire is divided; one *rules by day*, the other *by night*, (at least, the stars,) and yet all are subject to God's direction and disposal. Those rulers, therefore, which the Gentiles idolized, are the world's servants, and God's subjects; *Sun, stand thou still, and thou, moon*.

10. To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 11. And brought out Israel from among them: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 12. With a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 13. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 15. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 16. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his *mercy endureth for ever*. 17. To him which smote great kings: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 18. And slew famous kings: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 19. Sihon king of the Amorites: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 20. And Og the king of Bashan: for his *mercy endureth for ever*: 21. And gave their land for a

heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 22. *Even* a heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the Psalms, as instances both of the power of God, and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See cxxxv. 8, &c.

1. He brought them out of Egypt, v. 10-12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, does indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that, God, who, in all the plagues, distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them; not by a wile, but with a strong hand, and an arm stretched out to reach for, and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, Exod. xx. 2.

2. He forced them a way through the Red sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature, he *divided the sea into two parts*, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now that they were to enter into covenant with him; see Jer. xxxiv. 18. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And, to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red sea that was a lane to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness; (v. 16.) there he led them and fed them; their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this, the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, were the more observable, because they often provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert.

4. He destroyed kings before them, to make room for them; (v. 17, 18.) not deposed and banished them, but smote and slew them; in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never-failing mercy, to Israel. And that which magnified it, was, that they were *great kings* and *famous kings*, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest, of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were, the more did God's mercy to Israel appear in *giving such kings* for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the two first that were conquered on the other side Jordan, v. 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and not to view them in the gross; and in each instance to observe, and own, that God's *mercy endureth for ever*.

5. He put them in possession of a good land, v. 21, 22. He, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another, as pleased him. The *iniquity of the Amorites was now full*, and therefore it was taken from them; Israel was his *servant*, and though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have

some service out of them, for *to them pertained the service of God*. As he said to the Egyptians, *Let my people go*, so to the Canaanites, *Let my people in*, that they may serve me. In this, God's *mercy* to them *endureth for ever*, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

23. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 24. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 25. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated,

1. In the redemption of his church; (v. 23, 24.) in the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church, out of the hands of their oppressors; when, in the years of their servitude, their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David, at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies; but especially in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, "*He remembered us*, the children of men, *in our low estate*, in our *lost estate*, *for his mercy endureth for ever*: he sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies; *for his mercy endureth for ever*; he was sent to redeem us, and not the angels that sinned; *for his mercy endureth for ever*."

2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures; (v. 25.) *He gives food to all flesh*. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that, wherever he has given life, he gives food agreeable and sufficient; and he is a good Housekeeper, that provides for so large a family.

3. In all his glories, and all his gifts; (v. 26.) *Give thanks to the God of heaven*; this denotes him to be a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises; the *riches of his glory* are displayed in the *vessels of his mercy*, Rom. ix. 23. It also denotes him to be the great Benefactor, *for every good and perfect gift is from above*, from the Father of lights, the *God of heaven*; and we should trace every stream to the fountain; this and that particular mercy may perhaps endure but a while, but the mercy that is in *God endures for ever*; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

PSALM CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was near expiring, and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up; but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date as this, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors; probably it was toward the latter end of their captivity; for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace, (v. 8.) which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint makes it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, I. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, v. 1, 2. II. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, v. 3, 4. III. They cannot forget Jerusalem, v. 5, 6. IV. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, v. 7-9. In singing this psalm, we must be much affected with the concerns of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church, and the ruin of its enemies, in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the leaven of malice with our sacrifices.

1. **BY** the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* 4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? 5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning.* 6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but sowing in tears. Observe,

I. The mournful posture they were in, as to their affairs, and as to their spirits.

1. They were posted *by the rivers of Babylon*, in a strange land, a great way from their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war; the land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them *by the rivers*, with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their galleys; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there, (Jer. xxix. 5.) it shall not be in the cities, the places of concourse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the *river Chebar*, (Ezek. i. 3.) others by the *river Ulai*, Dan. viii. 2.

2. There they *sat down* to indulge their grief, by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under this yoke to *sit alone, and keep silence, and put their mouths in the dust*, Lam. iii. 28, 29. We *sat down*, as those that expected to stay, and were content, since it is the will of God that it must be so.

3. Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes; and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are sometimes put into by a trouble that surprises us, but they were deliberate tears; we *sat down and wept*, tears with consideration. We *wept when we remembered Zion*, the holy hill on which the temple was built. Their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory, and the satisfaction they had in Zion's courts, Lam. i. 7. *Jerusalem remembered, in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old*, Ps. xlii. 4. They remembered Zion's present desolations, and *favoured the dust thereof*, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, cii. 13, 14.

4. They laid by their instruments of music; (v. 2.) *We hanged our harps upon the willows.* (1.) The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment; these they laid aside, both because it was their judgment that they ought not to use them now that God called to weeping and mourning, (Isa. xxii. 12.) and their spirits were so sad, that they had no hearts to use them; they brought their harps with them, designing perhaps to use them for the alleviating of their grief, but it proved so great, that it would not admit the experiment; music makes some people melancholy; *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart.* (2.) The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites

harps; these they did not throw away, hoping they might yet again have occasion to use them, though they had no present use for them; God had cut them out other work, by *turning their feasting into mourning, and their songs into lamentations*, Ana. viii. 10. Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season, it is his will that we should *in every thing give thanks*, Isa. xxiv. 15, 16.

II. The abuses which their enemies put upon them when they were in this melancholy condition, v. 3. They had *carried them away captive* from their own land, and then *wasted them* in the land of their captivity, took what little they had from them; but this was not enough; to complete their woes, they insulted over them, they *required of us mirth and a song.* Now, 1. This was very barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy, in misery, is to be pitied, and not trampled upon. It argues a base and scold spirit to upbraid those that are in distress either with their former joys or with their present griefs, or to challenge those to be merry, who, we know, are out of tune for it; this is adding affliction to the afflicted. 2. It was very profane and impious; no songs would serve them but the *songs of Zion*, with which God had been honoured; so that in this demand they reflected upon God himself; as Belshazzar when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies *mocked at their sabbaths*, Lam. i. 7.

III. The patience wherewith they bore their abuses, v. 4. They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no not to ingratiate themselves with these at whose mercy they lay; they would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast before swine. David prudently *kept silence even from good*, when the *wicked were before him*, who, he knew, would ridicule what he said, and make a jest of it, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2. The reason they gave is very mild and pious; *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* They do not say, "How shall we sing, when we are so much in sorrow?" If that had been all, they might perhaps have put a force upon themselves, so far as to oblige their masters with a song; but, "It is the *Lord's song*, it is a sacred thing, it is peculiar to the temple-service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters. We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence as well as by religious speaking.

IV. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now that they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, v. 5, 6. Observe, 1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem; (1.) Their *heads* were full of it; it was always in their minds, they remembered it, they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it: many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers, they opened their windows toward Jerusalem; and how then could they forget it? (2.) Their *hearts* were full of it; they *preferred it above their chief joy*, and therefore they remembered it.

and could not forget it. What we love, we love to think of. They that rejoice in God, do, for his sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How steadfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall; "Let me be for ever disabled, either to sing or play on the harp, if I so far forget the religion of my country as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons, or the praising of Babylon's gods. *Let my right hand forget her art,*" (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it were withered,) "nay, *let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,* if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem, wherever I am." Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, *Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.* 3. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy *shall he be* that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9. Happy *shall he be* that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon, having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her impenitent, implacable, enemies; but this, not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the honour of his kingdom.

1. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with, and all others that were accessories to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that *helped forward the affliction*, (Zech. i. 15.) and triumphed in it; that *said, in the day of Jerusalem, the day of her judgment, "Rase it, rase it to the foundations;* down with it, down with it, do not leave one stone upon another." Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off, when their next neighbours had such an ill-will to them. And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birth-right and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; *Lord, remember them*, says the psalmist; which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who has said, *Vengeance is mine.* Note, They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. They that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

2. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it; (v. 8, 9.) *O daughter of Babylon,* proud and secure as thou art, we know well, by the scriptures of truth, *thou art to be destroyed;* or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, *who art the destroyer.* The destroyers shall be destroyed; (Rev. xiii. 10.) and

perhaps it is with reference to this, that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a *son of perdition*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction, *thou art to be destroyed.* It is spoken of, (1.) As a just destruction; she shall be paid in her own coin; "Thou shalt be served as *thou hast served us;* as barbarously used by the destroyers as we have been by thee." See Rev. xviii. 6. Let not those expect to find mercy, who, when they had power, did not show mercy. (2.) As an utter destruction; the very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces, by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape, if these little ones perish. These are the seed of another generation; so that, if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem's was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. (3.) As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall they be that do it; for they are fulfilling God's counsels; and therefore he calls Cyrus, who did it, his *servant*, his *shepherd*, his *anointed*, (Isa. xlv. 28.—xlv. 1.) and the soldiers, that were employed in it, his *sanctified ones*, Isa. xiii. 3. They are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel, and happy they who are any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, Rev. xix. 1.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

It does not appear, nor is it material to inquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it, I. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him, v. 1. 3. II. He looks forward with comfort, in hopes, 1. That others would go on to praise God like him, v. 4, 5. 2. That God would go on to do good to him, v. 6. 8. In singing this psalm, we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory, and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

A psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2. I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

I. How he would praise God; compare cxi. 1.

1. He will praise him with sincerity and zeal; *with my heart, with my whole heart;* with that which is within me, and with all that is within me; with uprightness of intention, and fervency of affection; inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions.

2. With freedom and boldness; *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee;* before the princes, and judges, and great men; either those of other nations, that visited him, or those of his own nation, that attended on him. Even in their presence, he will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise, if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. *Before the angels,* so some understand it, in religious assemblies, where there

is a special presence of angels, 1 Cor. xi. 10. 3. In the way that God had appointed; *I will worship towards thy holy temple.* The priests only went into the temple, the people, at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our Temple, and toward him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up our eyes, in all our addresses to God; *Our Father in heaven.*

II. What he would praise God for.

1. For the fountain of his comforts; *for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth;* for thy goodness, and for thy promise; mercy hid in thee, and mercy revealed by thee that God is a gracious God in himself, and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him. *For thou hast magnified thy word,* thy promise, which is truth, *above all thy name.* God has made himself known to us many ways, in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater things are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation, is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David, his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustrious, and redounded more to his glory, than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

2. For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, v. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers, with thankfulness, (1.) The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted, and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers. (2.) The sweet communications he then had from God; *Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, xx. 6. Observe, [1.] It was a speedy answer; *in the day when I cried.* Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer, grow rich by quick returns; *while we are yet speaking, God hears,* Isa. lxv. 24. [2.] It was a spiritual answer; God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God gives us strength in our souls, to bear the burthens, resist the temptations, and do the duties, of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

III. What influence he hoped that his praising God would have upon others, v. 4, 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his examples, to embrace religion; and if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others; They shall all praise thee; when they visited David, and, after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon, (as *all the kings of the earth* are expressly said to have done, 2 Chron. ix. 23.) they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look further to the calling of the Gentiles, and the discipling of all nations, by the gospel

of Christ, of whom it is said, that *all kings shall fall down before him*, Ps. lxxii. 11. Now it is here foretold, (1.) That *the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God.* All that came near David should hear them from him, cxix. 46. In the latter days, the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world. (2.) That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, Acts xiii. 48. (3.) That they shall sing *in the ways of the Lord;* in the ways of his providence and grace toward them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, They that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; if we are so, *great is the glory of the Lord.* It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those who walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master, and his work its own wages.

6. Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. 7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; thou shalt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things.

1. The favour God bears to his humble people; (v. 6.) *Though the Lord be high, and neither needs any of his creatures, nor can be benefitted by them, yet has he respect unto the lowly;* smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them, (Isa. lvii. 15.—lxvi. 1.) and, sooner or later, he will put honour upon them, while *he knows the proud afar off;* knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and welcome—that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke xviii.

2. The care God takes of his afflicted, oppressed, people, v. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to walk in the midst of trouble, but encourages himself with hope, (1.) That God would comfort him; "When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, *thou shalt revive me*, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles." Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. (2.) That he would protect him, and plead his cause; "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand, though not against mine enemies, to destroy them, yet against the wrath of mine enemies, to restrain that, and set bounds to it. (3.) That he would in due time work deliverance for him; *Thy right hand shall save me.* As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the Right Hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

3. The assurance we have, that, whatever good work God has begun in and for his people, he will perform it; (v. 8.) *The Lord will perfect that*

which concerns me, (1.) That which is most needful for me; and he knows best what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us, (Matth. vi. 32.) and he will order them for the best. (2.) That which we are most concerned about. Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God, and his happiness in God; that the former may be faithfully done, and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, Phil. i. 6. Observe, [1.] What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon; *Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever*. This he had made very much the matter of his praise, (xlii. 6.) and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope. For, if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere, must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, "*Lord, thy mercy endures for ever*; let me be for ever a monument of it." [2.] What use he makes of this confidence; it does not supersede, but quicken, prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition; *Forsake not, do not let go, the work of thine own hands*. Lord, I am the work of thine own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them." Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands; *he works in us both to will and to do*; it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end, that we may in faith pray, "Lord, do not forsake it." Whom he loves he loves to the end; and as for God, his work is perfect.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David; and a very pious devout meditation it is, upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon, and filled with, in singing this psalm. I. This doctrine is here asserted, and fully laid down, v. 1.-6. II. It is confirmed by two arguments. 1. God is every where present, therefore he knows all, v. 7.-12. 2. He made us, therefore he knows us, v. 13.-16. III. Some inferences are drawn, from this doctrine. 1. It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, v. 17, 18. 2. With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, v. 19.-22. 3. With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, v. 23, 24. This great and self-evident truth, That God knows our hearts, and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it, and seriously consider it, and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness, and upon our comfort.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **O** LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. 3. Thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways: 4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. 6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, That the God with whom we have to do has a perfect knowledge of us, and that all the motions and actions, both of our inward and of our outward man, are naked and open before him.

1. He lays down this doctrine in the way of an address to God; he says it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over, as when they are preached over; and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

2. He lays it down in a way of application to himself; not, "Thou hast known all," but, "Thou hast known me; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider." Then we know these things for our good, when we know them for ourselves, Job v. 27. When we acknowledge, "Lord, all souls are thine," we must add, "My soul is thine; thou that hatest all sin hatest my sin; thou art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me." So here, "Thou hast searched me, and known me; known me: so thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into." David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects, (Prov. xxv. 3.) but they are not so to their Sovereign.

3. He descends to particulars; "Thou knowest me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing; me, and all that belongs to me." (1.) "Thou knowest me and all my motions, my down-sitting to rest, my up-rising to work; with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down, and stir up myself when I rise up; what my soul reposes itself in, as its stay and support, what it aims at, and reaches toward, as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go." (2.) "Thou knowest all my imaginations; nothing is more close and quick than thought, it is always unknown to others, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Though my thoughts be ever so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice, that I myself cannot." Or, "Thou understandest them afar off, even before I think them, and long after I have thought them, and have myself forgotten them." Or, "Thou understandest them from afar, from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart," xxxiii. 14. (3.) "Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings; thou compassedst every particular path; thou sittest or winnowest my path," (so some,) "so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do;" as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment of God, xvii. 3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step. He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them, he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk toward, what company we walk with. (4.) "Thou knowest me in all my retirements; thou knowest my lying down; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day, and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart, and with what thoughts I go to bed." (5.) "Thou knowest me, and all I say; (v. 4.) There is not a word in my tongue, not a vain word, not a good word, but thou knowest it altogether; knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was

uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it." *When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord, thou knowest all;* so some read it; for thoughts are words to God. (6.) "Thou knowest me in every part of me; *Thou hast beset me behind and before,* so that, go which way I will, I am under thine eye, and cannot escape it. Thou hast *laid thine hand upon me,* and I cannot run away from thee." Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps, it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient, to feel how his pulse beats, or what temper he is in. God knows us, as we know not only what we see, but what we feel, and have our hands upon. *All his saints are in his hand.*

4. He speaks of it with admiration; (v. 6.) *It is too wonderful for me; it is high;* (1.) "Thou hast such a knowledge of me, as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me." (2.) "It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell." We cannot by searching find out how God searches and finds out us; nor do we know how we are known.

7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is therefore sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways.

1. Because he is always under his eye. If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient; but he is omnipresent; this supposes the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both; (Jer. xxxiii. 24.) he not only knows both, and governs both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknow-

ledges this also with application, and sees himself thus open before God.

1. No flight can remove us out of God's presence; "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, from thy presence,* from thy spiritual presence, from thyself, who art a Spirit?" *God is a Spirit,* and therefore it is folly to think that because we cannot see him, he cannot see us; *Whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Not that he desired to go away from God; no, he desired nothing more than to be near him; but he only puts the case, "Suppose I should be so foolish as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee; suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, or of disowning a dependence on thee, and of shifting for myself; alas, whither can I go?" A heathen could say, *Quocunque te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi—Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee.* Seneca.

He specifies the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them. (1.) *In heaven;* "If I ascend thither, as I hope to do shortly, *thou art there;* and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there." Heaven is a vast large place, replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there in any corner, or any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God, and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this. (2.) *In hell; in Sheol;* which may be understood of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it. Should we dig as deep as we can under ground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or it may be understood of the state of the dead. When we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God; from his eye, we cannot hide us in the grave. Or, of the place of the damned; *If I make my bed in hell,* (an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames,) *behold, thou art there,* in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, Rev. xiv. 10. (3.) In the remotest corners of this world, "*If I take the wings of the morning,* the rays of the morning light, (called the wings of the sun, Mal. iv. 2.) than which nothing is more swift, and flee upon them to the *uttermost parts of the sea,* or of the earth; (Job xxxviii. 12, 13.) should I flee to the utmost distant and obscure islands, (the *ultima Thule*, the *Terra incognita*;) I should find thee there; *there shall thy hand lead me,* as far as I go, and *thy right hand shall hold me,* that I can go no further, that I cannot go out of thy reach." God soon arrested Jonah, when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

2. No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not that of the thickest darkness, v. 11, 12. "*If I say, Yet the darkness shall cover me,* when nothing else will, alas! I find myself deceived, the curtains of the evening will stand me in no more stead than the wings of the morning; *even the night shall be light about me.* That which often favours the escape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat of a beaten army, will do me no kindness in fleeing from thee." When God divided between the light and darkness, it was with a reservation of this prerogative, that to himself *the darkness and the light should still be both alike.* The darkness darkeneth not from thee, for there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villainies.

II. Because he is the work of his hands: he that framed the engine knows all the motions of it; God made us, and therefore, no doubt, he knows us; he saw us when we were in the forming, and can we be hid from him now that we are formed? This argument he insists upon; (v. 13-16.) "*Thou hast possessed my reins; thou art Master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul; thou not only knowest, but governest, them, as we do that which we have possession of; and the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, for thou coveredst me in my mother's womb, thou madest me; (Job x. 11.) thou madest me a secret; the soul is concealed from all about us; Who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man?*" 1 Cor. ii. 11. Hence we read of *the hidden man of the heart*. But it was God himself that thus covered us, and therefore he can, when he pleases, discover us; when he hid us from all the world, he did not intend to hide us from himself.

Concerning the formation of man, of each of us;

1. The glory of it is here given to God, entirely to him; *for it is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. I will praise thee, the Author of my being; my parents were only the instruments of it.* It was done, (1.) Under the divine inspection; *My substance, when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but in fieri—in the forming, an unshapen embryo, was not hid from thee, thine eyes did see my substance.* (2.) By the divine operation. As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us; we were his work. (3.) According to the divine model; *In thy book all my members were written.* Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

2. Glorious things are here said concerning it. The generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration as his creation at first. Consider it, (1.) As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. We are *fearfully and wonderfully made*; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composition of every part, and the harmony of all together. (2.) As a great mystery; a mystery of nature; *My soul knows right well that it is marvelous, but how to describe it for any one else I know not; for I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the womb, as in the lowest parts of the earth; so privately, and so far out of sight.* (3.) As a great mercy; that all our members *in continuance were fashioned*, according as they were written in the book of God's wise counsel, *when as yet there was none of them*; or, as some read it, *and none of them was left out*. If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they had been wanting in our bodies, but, through his goodness, we have all our limbs and senses, the want of any of which might have made us burthens to ourselves. See what reason we have then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude that he who saw our substance when it was unfashioned, sees it now that it is fashioned.

17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! 18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.* 19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men. 20. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take *thy name* in vain. 21. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and

am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22. I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies. 23. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; 24. And see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience, divers ways.

1. He acknowledges, with wonder and thankfulness, the care God had taken of him all his days, v. 17, 18. God, who knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts toward him were thoughts of love: *thoughts of good, and not of evil*, Jer. xxiv. 11. God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, Jer. xxxi. 28. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare have been, (1.) Precious, to admiration; *How precious are they!* They are deep in themselves, such as cannot be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good, quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us above any other thoughts. (2.) Numerous, to admiration; *How great is the sum of them!* We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us; how many good turns he has done us; and what variety of mercies we have received from him. *If we would count them, the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, they are more in number than the sand, and yet every one great and very considerable*, xl. 5. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. (3.) Constant at all times; *"When I awake every morning, I am still with thee, under thine eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection."* This bespeaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him; *When I awake, I am with thee*, in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long, if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him, and we did then set him before us.

2. He concludes from this doctrine, that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it; *"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God; for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world. However thou suffer them to prosper for a while, surely thou wilt slay them at last."* Now observe, (1.) The reason why God will punish them; because they daringly affront him, and set him at defiance; (v. 20.) *They speak against thee wickedly; they set their mouth against the heavens*, (lxxiii. 9.) and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, Jude 15. They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by *taking his name in vain*; as we show our contempt of a man, if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. These that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying, by using them in an impertinent, irreverent, manner, take God's name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites; *"They speak of thee for mischief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is with some ill design, for a cloak of maliciousness; and, being enemies to God, while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain, they*

swear falsely." (2.) The use David makes of this prospect which he has of the ruin of the wicked. [1.] He defies them; "*Dehart from me, ye bloody men; ye shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship, nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me, for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me.*" [2.] He detests them; (v. 21, 22.) "*Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; do not I hate them that hate thee, and for that reason, because they hate thee? Therefore I hate them, because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee, grieved to see their rebellion, and to foresee their ruin which it will certainly end in?*" Note, Sin is hated, and sinners lamented, by all that fear God. "*I hate them, I hate the work of them that turn aside,*" (as he explains himself, ci. 3.) "*with a sincere and perfect hatred; I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them,*" lix. 8.

3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, v. 23, 24.

(1.) He desires that as far as he was in the wrong, God would discover it to him. They that are upright, can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with a humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves, (for a good man desires to know the worst of himself,) and to discover them to others. He that means honestly could wish he had a window in his breast, that any man may look into his heart; "*Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but see if there be any wicked way in me, any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it; and root it out of me, for I do not allow it.*"

(2.) He desires that, as far as he was in the right, he might be forwarded in it, which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually; *Lead me in the way everlasting.* Note, [1.] The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is everlastingly true and good; pleasing to God, and profitable to us; and will end in everlasting life. *It is the way of antiquity*, so some; the good old way. [2.] All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

PSALM CXL.

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of *Psalms*, though with but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be *his prayer when he was in the cave*, and it is probable that all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm, I. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them. v. 1. . 5. II. He encourages himself in God, as his God, v. 6, 7. III. He prays for, and prophesies, the destruction of his persecutors, v. 8. . 11. IV. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well, (v. 12, 13.) with which assurance we must comfort ourselves and one another in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

1. **D**ELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; 2. Which imagine mischiefs in their heart: continually are they gathered together for war. 3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah. 4. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man, who have purposed to overthrow my goings. 5. The

proud have hid a snare for me, and cords: they have spread a net by the way-side: they have set gins for me. Selah. 6. I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. 7. O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation; thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

In this, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, he was humbled before he was exalted; and that as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many who hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

1. He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours as dangerous men, whom he had reason to be afraid of, but wicked men, whom he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. There was one that seems to have been the ringleader of them, whom he calls *the evil man*, and *the man of violence*; (v. 1, 4.) probably he means Saul. The Chaldee paraphrast (v. 9.) names both Doeg and Ahithophel; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many beside this one, who were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For, (1.) They are very subtle, crafty to do mischief; they have imagined it, (v. 2.) have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They have *purposed* and plotted to *overthrow the goings* of a good man, (v. 4.) to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him, by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. For this purpose they have, like mighty hunters, *hid a snare*, and *spread a net*, and *set gins*, (v. 5.) that their designs against him, being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but *the Lord preserves the simple* without all those arts. (2.) They are very spiteful; as full of malice as Satan himself; *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent*, that infuses his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say, that one would think there was nothing *under their lips* but *adders' poison*, v. 3. With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass. And they endeavoured likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. (3.) They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all *gathered together against me for war*, v. 2. They who can agree in nothing else, can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub. (4.) They are *proud*, (v. 5.) conceited of themselves, and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining, sin, was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement, of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are, the faster are they ripening for ruin. *Pride goes before destruction.*

2. He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them; "*Lord, deliver*

me, preserve me, keep me; (v. 1, 4.) let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. *Keep me* from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I shall do." Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

3. He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, v. 6, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; *adders' poison* was under their lips, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger through the malice of his enemies: and it is well for us that we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, (1.) In his interest in God; "*I said, Thou art my God; and if my God, then my Shield and mighty Protector.*" In troublous dangerous times, it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. (2.) In his access to God. This comforted him, that he was not only taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say, with a humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.* (3.) In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him; "*O God the Lord, Jehovah, Adonai; as Jehovah, then art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect Being; as Adonai, thou art my Stay and Support, my Ruler and Governor; and therefore the Strength of my salvation, my strong Saviour; nay, not only my Saviour, but my Salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very Strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness.*" (4.) In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him; *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.* As he pleaded with Saul, that, for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God, that, in those services, He had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head, than Goliath's was; "*Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites.*" God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him, and depend upon him, in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9. *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* 10. Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of

the poor. 13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had,

I. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

1. Their disappointment; this he prays for, (v. 8.) that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge; "*Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked, but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but hear the voice of my supplications.*" He prays that their projects might not take effect, but be blasted; "*O further not his wicked device; let not Providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer not his wicked device to proceed, but chain his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits.*" Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. Such was David's prayer against Abithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves*; value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men, when they prosper, are made prouder, grow more impudent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, "*Lord, do not prosper them.*"

2. Their destruction. This he prays for, (as we read it,) but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy; and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

(1.) Of his own enemies; "*As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin,*" [1.] "*The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads;*" (v. 9.) the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin," vii. 15, 16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be, when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. [2.] The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to burning coals, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom: nay, as in the deluge, the waters from above, and these from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have burning coals cast upon them from above, (Job xx. 23.—xxvii. 22.) but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge, and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a deep pit, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, Isa. xxx. 33.

(2.) Of all others that are like them, v. 11. [1.] *Evil speakers* must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, ii. 5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the lip of truth shall be established for ever. [2.] Evil Doeg must expect to be destroyed. *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces: mischievous men

will be brought to light, and brought to ruin, the destruction appointed shall run them down and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners.*

II. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, v. 12, 13. 1. God will do them justice, in delivering them, who, being wronged, commit themselves to him; "*I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but the right of the poor, who have but little that they can pretend a right to.*" God is, and will be, the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; they that know him cannot but know this. 2. They will do him justice, (if I may so speak,) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him; "*Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name, when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosecuted with effect.*" The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence*, denote God's favour to them; "Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence, in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness," their duty to God; They shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their masters, both to do them honour, and to receive their commands. This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

PSALM CXLI.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; pursued, it is most likely, by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray; David did so, and had the comfort of it. I. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, v. 1, 2. II. For his powerful assistance, v. 3, 4. III. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, v. 5, 6. IV. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, v. 7. . 10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. 4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

1. David loved prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, v. 1, 2. *David cried unto God*; his crying denotes fervency in prayer, he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God denotes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? (1.) That God would take cognizance of it; "*Give ear to my voice*; let me have a gracious audience." They that cry in prayer may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness, but their liveliness. (2.) That he would visit him up in it; *Make haste unto me.* Those that know how to value God's gracious presence will be impatient for it, and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes does

not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. (3.) That he would be well-pleased with him in it; well-pleased with his *praying* and the *lifting up of his hands in prayer*; which denotes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the out-goings of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best affections to God; now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God, as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he mentions, rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who, in the evening of the world, and in the evening of the day, was to offer up himself a Sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. They that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet-smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet had no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

2. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayers would not be accepted, unless he took care to watch against sin; we must be as earnest for God's grace in us, as for his favour towards us.

(1.) He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words; (v. 3.) "*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth*, and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out, which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others." Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them; when enemies are provoking, we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing that no watchfulness or resolution of their own is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must *keep our mouth as with a bridle*; but that will not serve, we must pray to God to keep them. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord then when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh but in vain.

(2.) That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices; (v. 4.) "*Incline not mine heart to any evil thing*; whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified, by divine grace." The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up, and draw out, corrupt inclinations; we are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we received injuries, we may return them; and therefore we have need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with, or in opposition to, the *men that work iniquity*. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurement, nor driven on by any provocation, to do any sinful thing.

(3.) That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures; "*Let me not eat of their dainties.* Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins." *Better is a dinner of herbs* out of the way of temptation, than a

stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin; *stolen waters are sweet*, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye: but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will, at last, *bite like a serpent*, and *sting like an adder*, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn them against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be a kindness*: and let him reprove me; *it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head*: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities. 6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. 7. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth. 8. But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the LORD: in thee is my trust, leave not my soul destitute. 9. Keep me from the snare *which* they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Here, 1. David desires to be told of his faults; his enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of; yet, at the same time, he desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there was any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches; (v. 5.) *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. The righteous God*; so some. "I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them, that I will receive them as tokens of love, and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble." But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous, to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them it will be best taken. But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it, and learn obedience by it. We are here taught how to receive the reproofs of the righteous and wise. (1.) We must desire to be reproofed for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us; "Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart does not *smite me*, as it ought, let my friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being left alone in sin." (2.) We must account it a piece of friendship; we must not only bear it patiently, but take it as a kindness; for *reproofs of instruction are the way of life*, (Prov. vi. 23.) are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Though reproofs cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy, (Prov. xxvii. 6.) or the song of fools, Eccl. vii. 5. David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, 1 Sam. xxv. 32. (3.) We must reckon ourselves helped and healed by it; *it shall be as an excellent oil* to a wound, to mollify it, and close it up; *it shall not break my head*, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broken, as to be told of their faults; but, says David, "I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broken my head, that has broken my bones, Ps. li. 8. The reproof is an excellent oil, to cure the bruises sin has given me. It

shall not *break my head*, if it may but help to break my heart." (4.) We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly, with us, at least by our *prayers for them in their calamities*, and hereby we must show that we take it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse; "*Reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head, shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs*, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain."

2. David hopes his persecutors will, some time or other, bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his; (v. 6.) "*When their judges*" (Saul and his officers, who judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges) "*are overthrown in stony places*, among the rocks in the wilderness, then *they shall hear my words, for they are sweet*." Some think this refers to the relents that were in Saul's breast, when he sidd with tears, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* 1 Sam. xxiv. 16.—xxvi. 21. Or, we may take it more generally; even judges, great as they are, may come to be overthrown; those that make the greatest figure in this world do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before, will relish it, and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter, the word is sweet. Oppressed innocence cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves, they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

3. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced; (v. 7.) *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth*, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit; and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. *As one that cuts and cleaves the earth*; so some read it, alluding to the ploughman who tears the earth in pieces with his ploughshare, cxxix. 3. *Can these dry bones live?*

4. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance; "*But mine eyes are unto thee*; (v. 8.) for, when the case is ever so deplorable, thou canst redress all the grievances, from thee I expect relief, bad as things are, and in *thee is my trust*." These that have their eye toward God, may have their hopes in him.

5. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. (1.) That he would comfort him; "*Leave not my soul desolate and destitute*; still let me see where my help is." (2.) That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him; (v. 9.) "*Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me*; give me to discover it, and to evade it." Be the gin placed with ever so much subtlety, God can, and will, secure his people from being taken in it. (3.) That God would, in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and, in mercy, deliver him from being ruined by them; (v. 10.) "*Let the wicked fall into their own net*, the net which, intentionally, they procured for me; but which, meritoriously, they prepared for themselves. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua*—No law can be more just than that the architects of destruction should perish by their own contrivances. All that are bound over to God's justice are held on the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes prove the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

PSALM CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God, when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and which he afterwards penned in this form. Here is, I. The complaints he makes to God, (v. 1, 2.) of the subtlety, strength, and malice, of his enemies, (v. 3, 6.) and the coldness and indifference of his friends, v. 4. II. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, (v. 3.) and was his Refuge, v. 5. III. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, v. 6, 7. IV. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in praises, v. 7. Those that are troubled in mind, body, or estate, may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit,) both warrant his complaints, and fetch in his comforts.

Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave.

1. **I** CRIED unto the LORD with my voice: with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2. I poured out my complaint before him: I showed before him my trouble. 3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knowest my path: in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of *Adullam*, or that of *En-gedi*, that David prayed this prayer, is not material; it is plain that he was in distress; it was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so hotly pursued, and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind, as to pray this prayer, and, wherever he was, still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers, and our souls in prayer, to God. He calls this prayer *Maschil*, a *psalm of instruction*, because of the good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others.

In these verses, observe,

1. How David complained to God, v. 1, 2. When the danger was over, he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them, when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and to cry like children to their parents, when any thing frightens them. *David poured out his complaint*, which denotes a free and full complaint; he was large and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency, *He cried unto the Lord with his voice*, with the voice of his mind, (so some think,) for, being hid in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should have discovered him: but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot, or dare not, be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. Two things David laid open to God, in this complaint;

(1.) His distress; he exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case; *I showed before him my trouble*, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor *show him his trouble*, as if God did not know it without his showing, but, as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him, he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then

cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to show our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which does us no service; whereas, by showing it to God, we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves, or others, which we cannot with the due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

(2.) His desire. When he made his complaint, he *made his supplication*; (v. 1.) not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainants must be supplicants, for God will be sought unto.

2. What he complained of; "*In the way wherein I walked*, suspecting no danger, *have they privily laid a snare for me*, to entrap me." Saul gave Michal his daughter to David, on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 Sam. xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with a design against him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but, when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

3. What comforts him in the midst of these complaints; (v. 3.) "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me*, and ready to sink under the burthen of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to despair, *then thou knowest my path*, then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knowest it. Thou knowest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me; thou knowest also my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly show it, this comforted me, that thou knowest it, Job xxxiii. 10. Thou knowest it, thou didst protect, preserve, and secure, it," Ps. xxxi. 7. Deut. ii. 7.

4. I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. 5. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. 6. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors: for they are stronger than I. 7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us, for our instruction,

1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, v. 4. When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an outlaw, and it was dangerous for any body to harbour him, (witness Ahimelech's fate,) then *no man would know him*, but every body was shy of him. He looked on *his right hand* for an advocate, (cix. 31.) some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But, since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocence, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but *refuge failed him*, none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety. How many good men have been deceived by such swallow-friends, who are gone when winter comes! David's life was exceeding precious, and yet, when he was unjustly proscribed, *no man cared for it*, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type

of Christ, who, in his sufferings for us, was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was *none to help, none to uphold*, Isa. lxxiii. 5.

2. How he then found satisfaction in God, v. 5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them; "But," said he, "*I cried unto thee, O Lord, who knowest me, and carest for me, when none else will, and wilt not fail me nor forsake me, when men do;*" for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave, "*Thou art my Refuge and my Portion in the land of the living;* I depend upon thee to be so, *my Refuge* to save me from being miserable, *my Portion* to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge; Lord, *thy name* is the *strong tower* that *I run into*. Thou art *my Refuge*, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion; I can never think myself well-provided for, till I know that *the Lord is the Portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.*" Those who in sincerity take the Lord for their God, shall find him all-sufficient both as a Refuge and as a Portion, so that, as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest; "Lord, *thou art my Refuge and my Portion*, every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. Thou art so in the land of the living, while I live, and have my being, whether in this world, or in a better." There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time; we live in a world of dangers and wants; but what *danger* need we fear, if God is our Refuge, or what *wants*, if he be our Portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called the land of the living, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

3. How, in this satisfaction, he addressed himself to God; (v. 6, 7.) "Lord, give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, for *I am brought very low*, and if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. Lord, *deliver me from my persecutors*; either tie their hands or turn their hearts, break their power or blast their projects, restrain them or rescue me, *for they are stronger than I*, and it will be thine honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet myself a match for them. Lord, *bring my soul out of prison*; not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities." We may apply it spiritually; the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fettered, through the weakness of faith and the prevalency of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty, and to enlarge their hearts, that they may run the way of his commandments.

4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. (1.) By his own thanksgivings, into which his present complaints would then be turned; "*Bring my soul out of prison*, not that I may enjoy myself and my friends, and live at ease, no, nor that I may secure my country, but, *that I may praise thy name.*" This we should have an eye to, in all our prayers to God for deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God, and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity, for the excellent duty of praise. (2.) By the thanksgivings of many on his behalf; (2 Cor. i. 11.) "When I am enlarged, *the righteous shall compass me about*, for my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise. So the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate me on my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Maschil) instruc-

tions from me; they shall compass me, to join with me in my thanksgivings, *because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me.*" Note, The mercies of others ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and the praises of others, on our behalf, ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

PSALM CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much, and very often, not the same over again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, I. He complains of his troubles, through the oppression of his enemies, (v. 3.) and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink, notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, v. 4, 5. II. He prays, and prays earnestly, v. 6. 1. That God would hear him, v. 1, 7. 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, v. 2. 3. That he would not hide his face from him, (v. 7.) but manifest his favour to him, v. 8. 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty, (v. 8, 10.) and quicken him in it, v. 11. 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, v. 9, 11. 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, v. 12. We may more easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves, in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings, (which we all need at all times,) mercy, and grace.

A psalm of David.

1. **H**EAR my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. 2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4. Therefore is my spirit over-trained within me: my heart within me is desolate. 5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works: I muse on the work of thy hands. 6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, 1. David humbly begs to be heard; (v. 1.) not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for, having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab. ii. 1. He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests might be granted; *Hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications*: he is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his case might be brought to hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it, in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the Judge of right and wrong. Or, "Answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to." We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise, which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

2. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, v. 2. He seems here, if not to correct, yet to explain, his plea, (v. 1.) Deliver me in thy righteousness; "I mean," says he, "the righteous promises of the gospel, not the righteous threatenings of the law; if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocence, I am quite undone;" and therefore, (1.) His petition is, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with." In this prayer, we must own ourselves

to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour; and we must approve ourselves to him; we must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly inquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them according to law; and that, if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us, we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded, and then we are ruined for ever. But we must encourage ourselves with a hope that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and if *we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.* (2.) His plea is, *In thy sight shall no man living be justified* upon those terms, for no man can plead innocence nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned, or that he does not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, *we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3.—xv. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

3. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him; (v. 3.) "Saul, that great enemy, has persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far, that he has already *smitten it down to the ground*; though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to *dwell in darkness*, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion, fit to be appeared for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure, fit to be appeared against?"

4. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles; (v. 4.) *Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me*, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings, within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not so easily outrun. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.*

5. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the oppression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, (1.) He looks back, and *remembers the days of old*, (v. 5.) God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, lxxvii. 5, 11. (2.) He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world; *I meditate on all thy works*. Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in them, and *therefore* do not receive the benefit they might by them, because

they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious, curious, subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarcely touched upon it. *I muse on*, or, as some read it, *I discourse of*, the operation of thy hands; how great, how good, it is! The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man, Isa. li. 12, 13. (3.) He looks up with earnest desires toward God and his favour; (v. 6.) *I stretch forth my hands unto thee*, as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it, and bid it welcome; "*My soul thirsteth after thee, it is to thee*, (so the word is,) *entire for thee, intent on thee, it is as a thirsty land*, which, being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain; so do I need, so do I crave, the support and refreshment of divine consolations under mine afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me." This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do they sink under their load, who will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7. Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. 8. Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I fly unto thee to hide me. 10. Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. 11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; "*Hear me speedily*, and defer no longer, for *my spirit faileth*. I am just ready to faint; reach the cordial, quickly, quickly, or I am gone." It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love; *Make haste, O God, to help me*.

Three things David here prays for;

I. The manifestations of God's favour toward him; that God would be well pleased with him, and let him know that he was so; this he prefers before any good, iv. 6. 1. He dreads God's frowns; "*Lord, hide not thy face from me*; Lord, be not angry with me; do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me." Those that have the truth of grace, cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case, if God withdrew from him; "*Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath*, for then I am like them that *go down to the pit*, down to the grave; I am a dead man, weak, and pale, and ghastly; thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit." Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit, may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those who are going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, Job vi. 4. Ps. lxxxviii. 6. 2. He entreats God's favour;

(v. 8.) *Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning.* He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him, that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words; but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, "Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to *hear joy and gladness*," li. 8. God speaks to us by his word, and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to *hear his loving-kindness*, (cvii. 43.) that we may set that always before us; "*Cause me to hear it in the morning*, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's loving-kindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long." His plea is, "*For in thee do I trust*, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other." It is a usual thing for God's goodness to be wrought for those who trust in him, (xxxii. 8.) who by faith draw it out.

II. The operations of God's grace in him. Those he is as earnest for, as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays; 1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works; for God deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this effect. (1.) *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.* Sometimes, those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt and in the dark which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God, by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to show them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man does not ask what is the way in which he *must* walk, or in which is the most *pleasant* walking, but what is the *right* way, the way in which he *should* walk. He pleads, "*I lift up my soul unto thee*, to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will." He did not only importunately, but impartially, desire to know his duty; and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) "*Teach me to do thy will*; not only show me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dexterously to my duty." It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, "*Thou art my God*, and therefore my Oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my Ruler, whose will I desire to do." If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master does his servant. (3.) *Lead me into the land of uprightness*, into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or, into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led, and kept safe, to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land, unless God show us; nor go in that way, unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak, or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us, and carry us on, in it. The plea is, "*Thy Spirit is good*, and able to make me good;" good and willing to help those that are at a loss. *I et thy good Spirit lead me*, so some read it. They that have the Lord for their God have his Spirit for their Guide; and it is both their character and their privilege that they are *led by the Spirit*.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will; (v. 11.) "*Quicken me, O Lord*; quicken my graces, that they may be active, quicken my devotions, that they may be lively, quicken me to my

duty, and quicken me in it, and this *for thy name's sake*." The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

III. The appearance of God's providence for him; that God would, in his own way and time, 1. Give him rest from his troubles; (v. 9.) "*Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies*, that they may not have their will against me; *for I fly unto thee to hide me*; I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it." Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their Hiding-Place, who by faith make him such. He explains himself, (v. 11.) "*For thy righteousness-sake, bring my soul out of trouble*; for thy promise-sake, nay, for thy mercy-sake," (for some by *righteousness* understand *kindness and goodness*), "do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let not my heart be troubled," John xiv. 1. 2. That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble; (v. 12.) "*Of thy mercy to me, cut off mine enemies*, that I may be no longer in fear of them; and *destroy all them*, whoever they be, how numerous, how powerful, soever, *who afflict my soul*, and create vexation to that; *for I am thy servant*, and am resolved to continue such, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service." This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, who will not have him to reign over them, who grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

PSALM CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble, (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble,) the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 17. In this psalm, 1. He acknowledges, with triumph and thankfulness, the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, v. 1..4. II. He prays to God to help him against the enemies who threatened him, (v. 5..8.) and again, v. 11. III. He rejoices in the assurance of victory over them, v. 9, 10. IV. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleases himself with the hopes of it, v. 12..15. In singing this psalm, we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; we may pray for the prosperity of our souls, of our families, and of our land; and, in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, we may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A psalm of David.

1. **B**LESSED be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: 2. My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust, who subdueth my people under me. 3. LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? 4. Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away. 5. Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6. Cast forth lightning and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows and destroy them. 7. Send thy hand from

above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; 8. Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here,

I. David acknowledges his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, *v. 1, 2*. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him.

He gives to God the glory of two things:

1. What he was to him; *Blessed be the Lord my Rock, (v. 1.) my Goodness, my Fortress, v. 2*. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us, accordingly, to depend upon him; all the saints, who by faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer, but to outdo, their expectations. David speaks it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy; as the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God, and his interest in him. (1.) "*He is my Strength*, on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare; my Rock to build on, to take shelter in." Even when we are weak, we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (2.) "*My Goodness*; not only good to me, but my chief Good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the Author of all the goodness that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift." (3.) "*My Fortress, and my high Tower*, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong-hold." David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds at En-gedi, (1 Sam. xxiii. 29.) which perhaps were natural fastnesses. He had lately made himself master of the strong-hold of Zion, which was fortified by art, and he dwelt in the fort; (2 Sam. v. 7, 9.) but he depends not on these. "Lord," says he, "thou art my Fortress, and my high Tower." The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer, far exceeding those either of nature or art. (4.) "*My Deliverer*, and, as it is in the original, very emphatically, *my Deliverer to me*;" "not only a Deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me, and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit." (5.) "*My Shield*, to guard me against all the malignant darts that mine enemies let fly at me; not only my Fortress at home, but my Shield abroad in the field of battle." Wherever a believer goes, he carries his protection along with him. *Fear not, Abram, I am thy Shield.*

2. What he had done for him. He was bred a shepherd, and seems not to have been designed by his parents or himself for any thing more. But, (1.) God had made him a soldier; his hands had been used to the crook, and his fingers to the harp, but God taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to, he either finds them, or makes them, fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill; the same that teaches the meanest husbandman his art, teaches the greatest general his. It is pity that any, whose fingers God has taught to fight, should fight against him or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness, who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of. (2.) God had made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two; *He subdueth my people under me*. The providence of

God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies. There was a special hand of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

II. He admires God's condescension to man, and to himself in particular; (*v. 3, 4.*) "*Lord, what is man*, what a poor little thing is he, *that thou takest knowledge of him! that thou makest account of him!*" that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race, as thou hast had to me!" Considering the many disgraces which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, (the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David,) and upon the Messiah, (to whom those words are applied, Heb. ii. 6.) who was *therefore highly exalted, because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man*, and therefore has authority to execute judgment, *because he is the Son of man*. A question to this purport David asked, (Ps. viii. 4.) and there he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in; (*v. 5.*) *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*. Here he illustrates it by the consideration of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him; (*v. 4.*) *Man is like to vanity*, so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself. Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. *His days* have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body: *they are as a shadow*, dark and flitting, transitory, and finishing with the sun, and, when that sets, resolving itself into all shadow. *They are as a shadow that passeth away*, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable.

III. He begs of God to strengthen him, and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, *v. 5-8*. He does not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but says, *Scatter them, destroy them*. God knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterward he describes them; (*v. 7, 8.*) "*They are strange children*, Philistines, aliens, had neighbours to Israel, heathens whom we are bound to be strange to, and not to make any leagues with, and who therefore carry it strangely towards us." Notwithstanding the advantages with which God had blessed David's arms against them, they were still vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in; one cannot take their word, for their *mouth speaketh vanity*; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; *for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood*: against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but may depend on the God of truth and justice, who hates falsehood, to defend us from them.

1. David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary, for the conviction of those who preferred their dunghill-deities before the God of Israel; (*v. 5.*) "*Bow thy heavens, O Lord*, and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of them, Isa. lxiv. 1. Let thy providence threaten mine enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth, when they are thick, and hang very low, big with a storm. Fight against those that fight against us, so

that it may visibly appear thou art for us. *Touch the mountains*, our strong and stately enemies, and let them *smoke*. Show thyself by the ministry of thy angels, as thou didst upon mount Sinai."

2. That he would appear against his enemies; that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows, his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof; so penetrating is the force of lightning: that he himself would shoot these arrows, who, we are sure, never misses his mark, but hits where he aims.

3. That he would appear for him, v. 7. He begs for their destruction, in order to his own deliverance, and the repose of his people; "*Send thy hand, thy power, from above*, for that way we look for help; *rid me, and deliver me out of these great waters* that are ready to overflow me." God's time to help his people is when they are sinking, and all other helps fail.

9. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings, will I sing praises unto thee. 10. *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. 11. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: 12. That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters *may be* as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: 13. That our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: 14. That our oxen *may be* strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case: *yea, happy is that people* whose God is the Lord.

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm, as in the former; he first gives glory to God, and then begs mercy from him.

I. He praises God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, v. 9, 10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God; *I will sing a new song to thee, O God*; a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 Chron. xx. 20, 21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God; he will praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings, in the best manner, thinking all little enough to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be; (v. 10.) *It is he that giveth salvation unto kings*. This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but, after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them, xxxiii. 16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their Protector. How much service do

they owe him, then, with their power, who gives them all their salvation! 2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He has engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects, and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for *David his servant*, whom he had many a time *delivered from the hurtful sword*, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New Testament song; God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a Conqueror over all the powers of darkness, Isa. xlii. 1.—xlix. 8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a *Horn of salvation*.

II. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

1. That he might be delivered from the public enemies, v. 11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, v. 7, 8. His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and who would certainly over-reach an honest man, and be too hard for him; "Therefore, Lord, do thou *deliver me from them*, for they are a strange sort of people."

2. That he might see the public peace and prosperity; "Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief." David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people; wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

(1.) The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people.

[1.] A hopeful progeny; (v. 12.) "*That our sons and our daughters may be* in all respects such as we could wish." He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children promising, and likely to do well.

First, It is pleasant to see *our sons as filants grown up in their youth*, as olive plants, (ccxxviii. 3.) the *planting of the Lord*; (Isa. lxi. 3.) to see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted; to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day; to see them *in their youth*, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. *Secondly*, It is no less desirable to see *our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace or temple*. By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building, when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief Corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and *become women professing godliness*, when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

[2.] Great plenty. Numerous families increase the care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. *First*, That their store-houses might be well replenished with the fruits and products of the earth; *That our garners may be full*, like those of the good householder, who brings out of them

things new and old; those things that are best new, he has in *that* state; those that are best when they are kept, he has in *that* state; that we may have in them *all manner of stores*, for ourselves and our friends; that, living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully; that, having abundance, we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have *our garners full*? Jam. v. 3. *Secondly*, That their flocks might greatly increase; *That our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands, in our folds*. Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks; (Prov. xxvii. 26.) and of ours too, else wool would not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. *Thirdly*, That their beasts designed for service might be fit for it; *That our oxen may be strong to labour in the plough; that they may be fat and fleshy*, so some; in good working case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy and take our pleasures, but that we *may be strong to labour*, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong, it is for labour.

[3.] An uninterrupted peace. *First*, That there be no war; *no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters*. Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. *Secondly*, That there be no oppression or faction, *no complaining in our streets*; that the people may have no cause to complain, either of their government or of one another; nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

(2.) His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation which he so much desired; (v. 15.) *Happy are the people that are in such a case*; but it is seldom so, and never long so; *yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord*. The relation of a people to God as theirs, is here spoken of, either, [1.] As that which is the fountain whence all those blessings flow. Happy are the Israelites, if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be *in such a case*. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, [2.] As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, *Happy are the people that are in such a case*; they are blessed that prosper in the world; but he immediately corrects himself, *Yea, rather, happy are the people whose God is the Lord*, who have his favour and love and grace, according to the tenor of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this, and much more, cannot make us happy unless the Lord be our God, so, if he be, the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable.

PSALM CXLV.

The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this, and the five that follow it to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though this only is entitled *David's psalm*, yet we have no reason to think but that they were all his, as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer, follow six psalms of praise; for those that are much in prayer, shall not want matter for praise; and those that have sped in prayer, must abound in praise. Our thanksgivings for mercy, when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it, when we were in pursuit of it. David, in the last of his begging psalms, had promised to praise God, (cxliv. 9.) and here

he performs his promise. 2. That the book of *Psalms* concludes with psalms of praise, all praise, for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is that in which all the psalms centre. And it intimates, that God's people, toward the end of their life, should abound much in praise, and the rather, because, at the end of their life, they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise; and the nearer they come to heaven, the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of those psalms which are composed alphabetically, (as Ps. xxv. and xxxiv. &c.) that it might be the more easily committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude in this bright constellation; and some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, That whosoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day, shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, I. David engages himself and others to praise God, v. 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 12. II. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise; God's greatness, (v. 3.) his goodness, (v. 8, 9.) the proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom, (v. 13.) the kingdom of providence, (v. 14..16.) the kingdom of grace; (v. 17..20.) and then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God, (v. 21.) with which resolution our hearts must be filled, and in which they must be fixed, in singing this psalm.

David's psalm of praise.

1. **I** WILL extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. 4. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. 7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9. The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The entitling of this, *David's psalm of praise*, may intimate not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it, and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In the former part of the psalm, God's glorious attributes are praised, as, in the latter part of the psalm, his kingdom and the administration of it. Observe,

I. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

1. Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engages himself, and has his heart much enlarged in it. What he does, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it; it was his duty, it was his delight. Observe, (1.) How he expresses the work itself; *I will extol thee, and bless thy name*; (v. 1.) "I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee, and endeavour to raise the like in others." When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again, (v. 2.) *I will bless thee, I will praise thy name*; the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein.

Again, (v. 5.) *I will speak of thine honour*; and, (v. 6.) *I will declare thy greatness*. He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak, with reverence, to his praise, upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? (2.) How he expresses his resolution to persevere in it. [1.] He will be constant to this work; *Every day will I bless thee*. Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass, though ever so busy a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God: we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. [2.] He will continue in it; *I will bless thee for ever and ever*, (v. 1.) and again, v. 2. This intimates, *First*, That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout *his ever* in this world. *Secondly*, That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. *Thirdly*, That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world. They that make it their constant work on earth, shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.

2. He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. (1.) "They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it; when *I declare thy greatness, men shall speak of it*, (v. 6.) *they shall abundantly utter it*," (v. 7.) or *pour it out*, as the word is; they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so. (2.) "They shall keep it up, when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession; (v. 4.) *One generation shall praise thy works to another*." The generation that is gone off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell what they have seen in their days, and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly *declare thy mighty acts*; (lxxviii. 3.) and the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off; so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship; for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in, in which there is no succession of generations.

II. What we must give to God the glory of.

1. Of his greatness, and his great works. We must declare, *Great is the Lord*, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty incontestable; and therefore there is no dispute, but *Great is the Lord, and, if great, then greatly to be praised*, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginable. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unsearchable; who can conceive, or express, how great God is? But then it is so much the more to be praised; when we cannot, by searching, find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. God is great, for, (1.) His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he has set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness, we must not fail to *speak of the glorious honour of his majesty*, the splendour of the glory of his majesty, v. 5. How bright he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it! (2.)

His works are wondrous in this lower world; the preservation, maintenance, and government, of all the creatures, speak the Creator very great. When therefore we declare his greatness, we must observe the unquestionable proofs of it, and must *declare his mighty acts*, (v. 4.) *speak of his wondrous works*, (v. 5.) *the might of his terrible acts*, v. 6. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supreme Director; it is he that performs all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of his justice, they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, observing the finger of God, his hand, his arm, in all, that we may marvel.

2. Of his goodness; this is his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 19. It is what he glories in, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) and it is what we must give him the glory of; *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy greatness, goodness*, v. 7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted, nay, they can never be lessened, for he ever will be as rich in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable goodness, it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind, and preserve the memorials of; for it is *worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance*: and the memory we have of God's goodness we should *utter*, we should *abundantly utter*, as those who are full of it, very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But, whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget, at the same time, to *sing of his righteousness*; for as he is gracious in rewarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together, Rom. xi. 22.

(1.) There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature; (v. 8.) *The Lord is gracious* to those that serve him, he is *full of compassion* to those that need him, *slow to anger* to those that have offended him, and *of great mercy* to all that seek him, and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to *forgive*, more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

(2.) There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, v. 9. As he is good, so he *does good*; he is *good to all*, to all his creatures, from the highest angels to the meanest worm; to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. *His tender mercies are over all his works*. [1.] All his works, all his creatures, receive the fruits of his merciful care and bounty; it is extended to them all, he hates nothing that he has made. [2.] The works of his mercy outshine all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the glory of God be for ever so illustrious, as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the divine goodness will the everlasting hallelujahs of all the saints be sung.

10. All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. 14. The LORD upholdeth all that fall.

and raiseth up all *those that be bowed down*. 15. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17. The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18. The LORD is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. 21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of him who is *optimus et maximus*—the best and greatest of beings, were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are taught to give him the *glory of his kingdom*, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clear, so very bright. Observe, as before,

I. From whom the tribute of praise is expected; (v. 10.) *All God's works shall praise him*; they all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour, he will get him honour upon; but his *saints* do *bless* him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him, which other creatures have not, but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They bless him, for they collect the rent and tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. *All God's works do praise him*, as the beautiful building praises the builder, or the well-drawn picture praises the painter; but his *saints* *bless* him, as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, the saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

II. For what this praise is to be given; *They shall speak of thy kingdom*. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of, and often spoken of. As, before, he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so, here, he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

1. The greatness of his kingdom; it is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To show the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, (1.) The pomp of it. Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and, believing, we should *speak of, the glory of his kingdom*, (v. 11.) *the glorious majesty of it*, (v. 12.) for he has prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. (2.) The power of it; *When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom*, they must *talk of his power*, the extent of it, the efficacy of it, his power, by which he can do any thing, and does every thing he pleases; (v. 11.) and, as a proof of it, let them *make known his mighty acts*, (v. 12.) that *the sons of men* may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects, and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty Poten-

tate. (3.) The perpetuity of it, v. 13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchies come to an end; but, Lord, *thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*. God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now intrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all to eternity. His *dominion endures throughout all generations*, for he himself is eternal, and his counsels unchangeable and uniform; and Satan, who has set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in a chain.

2. The goodness of his kingdom. His royal style and title are, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*; and his government answers to his title. The goodness of God appears in what he does.

(1.) For all the creatures in general; (v. 15, 16.) *He provides food for all flesh*, and therein appears his everlasting mercy, cxxxvi. 25. All the creatures live upon God, and as they had their being from him at first, so from him they have all the supports of their being, and on him they depend for the continuance of it. [1.] The eye of their expectation attends upon him; *The eyes of all wait on thee*. The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to *wait upon God*, because they seek their food according to the instinct which the God of nature has put into them, (and *they sow not, neither do they reap*, Matth. vi. 26.) and because they take what the God of nature has provided for them, in the time and way that he has appointed, and are content with it. [2.] The hand of his bounty is stretched out unto them; *Thou givest them their meat in due season*; the meat proper for them, and in the proper time, when they need it; so that none of the creatures, ordinarily, perish for want of food, no not in the winter. *Thou openest thy hand freely and liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing*; except some of the unreasonable children of men, that will be satisfied with nothing, but are still complaining, still crying, *Give, give*.

(2.) For the children of men in particular, whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

[1.] He does none of them any wrong, for, (v. 17.) *The Lord is righteous in all his ways*, and not unrighteous in any of them; he is *holy*, and acts like himself, with a perfect rectitude in all his works. In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none, but administering justice to all. *The ways of the Lord are equal*, though ours are unequal. In giving laws, in deciding controversies, in recompensing services, and punishing offences, he is incontestably just, and we are bound to own it.

[2.] He does all of them good, his own people in a special manner. *First*, He supports those that are sinking, and it is his honour to help the weak, v. 14. He *upholds all that fall*, in that, though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave, and yet Providence wonderfully upholds them, raises them up, and says, *Return*, xc. 3. If all had died, who once seemed dying, the world would have been very thin. Many of the children of God, who have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts, so that, though they *fell*, they were *not utterly cast down*, xxxvii. 24. If those who are *bowed down* by oppression and affliction, be *raised up*, it was God that raised them. And with respect to all those that are *heavy-laden* under the burthen of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise

them. *Secondly*, He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, v. 18, 19. In *this* appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petitioning, but all the encouragement that can be to petition. 1. The grant is very rich, that God will be *nigh to all that call upon him*; he will be always within call of their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If a neighbour that is *near is better than a brother afar off*, (Prov. xxvii. 10.) much more a God that is near. Nay, he will not only be *nigh to them*, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but *he will fulfil their desires*; they shall have what they ask, and find what they seek. It was said, (v. 16.) that he *satisfies the desire of every living thing*; much more *will he fulfil the desire of them that fear him*; for he that feeds his birds will not starve his babes. *He will hear their call, and will save them*; that is, hearing them to purpose, as he heard David, that is, saved him *from the horn of the unicorn*, xxii. 21. 2. The proviso is very reasonable; he will hear and help us, (1.) If we *fear him*, if we worship and serve him with a holy awe of him; for, otherwise, how can we expect that he should accept us? (2.) If we *call upon him in truth*; for he desires that in the inward part. We must be faithful to God, and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions, inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth. (3.) He takes *them* under his special protection who have a confidence and complacency in him, v. 20. *The Lord preserves all them that love him*; they lie exposed in this world, but he, by preserving them in their integrity, will effectually secure them, that no real evil shall befall them. 3. If any are destroyed, they may thank themselves; *All the wicked he will destroy*, but they have, by their wickedness, fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, that *with their eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked*, (xci. 8.) and God will, by *this* means, preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes, (1.) With a resolution to give glory to God himself; (v. 21.) *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord*. When we have said what we can, in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did, (v. 1.) but conclude them with it, as he does here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of our thanksgiving be. While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises. (2.) With a call to others to do so too; *Let all flesh*, all mankind, *bless his holy name for ever and ever*. Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever; it is pity but that they should be all so engaged.

PSALM CXLVI.

This, and all the rest of the psalms that follow, begin and end with *Hallelujah*, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name *Jah*, the contraction of *Jehovah*. In this excellent psalm of praise, I. The psalmist engages himself to praise God, v. 1, 2. II. He engages others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him. 1. He shows why we should not trust in men, v. 3, 4. 2. Why we should trust in God, v. 5. Because of his power in the kingdom of nature, (v. 6.) his dominion in the kingdom of providence, (v. 7.) and his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah, (v. 8, 9.) that everlasting kingdom, (v. 10.) to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye in the singing of it.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3. Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is no help*. 4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince; as such, it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to *dance before the ark*; but he was so far from being of this mind, that he will himself be first and foremost in the work, v. 1, 2. He thinks his dignity is so far from excusing him from it, that it rather obliged him to lead in it; and that it was so far from lessening him, that it really magnified him; therefore he stirs up himself to it, and to make a business of it; *Praise the Lord, O my soul*; and resolves to abide by it, "I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as the *Lord*, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God, in covenant with me." Then praise is most pleasant, when, in praising God, we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to. "This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it while I have any being, for when I have no being on earth, I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better." That which is the great end of our being, ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being; "In thee must our time and powers be spent."

2. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes; that they should all come and *trust in his shadow*, and make him their *stay and strong hold*. "No," says David, "*Put not your trust in princes*, (v. 3.) not in me, nor in any other; do not repose your confidence in them, do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity, some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble; be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity, it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words." But though we suppose them wise and good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.

(1.) We cannot be sure of their ability; even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect. David himself owned, (2 Sam. iii. 39.) *I am this day weak, though anointed king*. So that in the *son of man there is often no help*, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wit's end, as a *man astonished*, and then, though a *mighty man*, he *cannot save*, Jer. xiv. 9.

(2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we

expect most from him; (v. 4.) *His breath goeth forth*, so it does every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then he returns to his earth. ¹ *He earth is his*, in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, Gen. iii. 19. It is his, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he has chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he has set his affections. He shall go to his own place. Or rather, it is his earth, because of the property he has in it; and, though he has had large possessions on earth, a grave is all that will remain to him. *The earth God has given to the children of men*, and great striving there is about it, and, as a mark of their authority, men call their lands by their own names. But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remains. But when he returns to his earth, *in that very day his thoughts perish*; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us, vanish and are gone; and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, Job xvii. 11. And then what comes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them, which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*, and will not be there long.

5. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help*, whose hope is in the LORD his God; 6. Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever; 7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners. 8. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous. 9. The LORD preserveth the strangers, he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes, (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed,) here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured. *Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his Help*, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him; and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Those shall have God for their Help, 1. Who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. Who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him; who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, (1.) In the providence of God, for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is. (2.) In the grace of Christ, for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the fol-

lowing verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect toward the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbins, who says of v. 10. that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it does so, he thinks will appear by comparing v. 7, 8. with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah; (Matth. xi. 5, 6.) *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk*; and the closing words there, *Blessed is he whosever shall not be offended in me*, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to v. 5. *Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God*, and who is not offended in him.

Let us take a view of the mighty encouragements here given to us to hope in the Lord our God.

1. He is the *Maker of the world*, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him; (v. 6.) *He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is*, and therefore his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and *without whom was not any thing made that was made*. It is a great support to faith, that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a goodwill to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth for ever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true *from the beginning*; and therefore true *to the end*. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, the faithful Witness, as well as the Beginning, the Author and Principle, of the creation of God, Rev. iii. 14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for *all the promises are in him yea and amen*.

3. He is the Patron of injured innocency; *He pleads the cause of the oppressed*, and (as we read it) he executes judgment for them. He often does it in his providence, righting those that suffer wrong, and clearing up their integrity; he will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and, all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, Jude 15.

4. He is a bountiful Benefactor to the necessitous; *He gives food to the hungry*; so God does in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once, when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family; this encourages to hope in him as the Nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the Author of liberty to those that were bound; *The Lord looseth the prisoners*. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and afterward in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought, in making the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear, with that one word, *Ephphatha*, *Be opened*, his cleansing of lepers, and so discharging them from their confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of *loosing the prisoners*; and we may take encouragement from those, to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

6. He gives sight to those that have been long deprived of it; *The Lord can open the eyes of the blind*, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of; witness Gen. xxi. 19. and the prophet's servant, 2 Kings vi. 17. But this has special reference to Christ; for *since the world began, was it not heard*

that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind, till Christ did it, (John ix. 32.) and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

7. He sets that straight that was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink; he *raises them that are bowed down*, by comforting and supporting them under their burthens, and, in due time, removing their burthens. This was literally performed by Christ, when he made a poor woman straight, that had been *bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself*; (Luke xiii. 12.) and he still does it by his grace, giving rest to them that were weary and heavy-laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people; *The Lord loveth the righteous*, and they may, with the more confidence, depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous, *by fulfilling all righteousness*.

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care; *The Lord preserveth the strangers*. It ought not to pass without remark, that the name *Jehovah* is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power (that of Jehovah) that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed; and that it is as much the glory of God to succour them that are in misery, as it is to ride on the heavens by his name *Jah*, lxviii. 4. (1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but *the Lord preserveth them*, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection, and been kept alive by it. (2.) *Widows and fatherless children*, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them right, nay, that will do them wrong; but *the Lord relieveth them*, and raiseth up friends for them. See Exod. xxii. 22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, *may find mercy*, Hos. xiv. 3.

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom, and oppress the faithful subjects of it; *the way of the wicked he turneth upside down*, and therefore let us *hope in him*, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah, that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth, that militate against his church, so that, having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, v. 10. Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times, that *the Lord shall reign for ever*, in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, *even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations*. Christ is set King on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader, it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch, or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that *the Lord reigns as Zion's God*, as Zion's King, that the Messiah is Head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

PSALM CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise: some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity: but it is so much of a piece with Ps. cxlv. that I rather think it was penned by David, and what is said, v. 2, 13, may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying

of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that were then outcasts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divides it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. 1. We are called upon to praise God, v. 1, 12. 11. We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified, 1. As the God of nature, and so he is very great, v. 4, 5, 8, 9, 15, 18. 2. As the God of grace, comforting his people, v. 3, 6, 11. 3. As the God of Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion, settling their civil state, (v. 2, 13, 14.) and especially settling religion among them, v. 19, 20. It is easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do it with suitable affections.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD: for *it is good to sing praises unto our God*; for *it is pleasant*; and praise is comely. 2. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. 3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their names*. 5. Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. 6. The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God; 8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. 10. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Here,

1. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason, that we are thus called to it again and again; *Praise ye the Lord*, (v. 1.) and again, (v. 7.) *Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God*, let all our praises be directed to him, and centre in him; for it is good to do it; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us: it is acceptable to our Creator, and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just, and good, the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good; for, 1. It is pleasant; holy joy and delight are required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages, it is heaven upon earth, it is what we should be in, as in our element. 2. It is comely, it is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God, we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

II. God is recommended to us as the proper Object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

1. The care he takes of his chosen people, v. 2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, *The Lord builds up Jerusalem*. The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building; he framed the model of it in his own counsels, he founded it by the preaching of his gospel, he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increases it.

He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance, and bringing them again into the communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day are gathered together again.

2. The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, *v. 3.* They are *broken in heart*, and wounded, humbled, and troubled, for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is, that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent, under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God, and the injury they have done to themselves, by sin. To those whom God heals with the consolations of his Spirit, he speaks peace; assures them that their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into their bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to rejoice. They who have had experience of this need not be called upon to praise the Lord, for, when he brought them *out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock*, he *put a new song in their mouths*, *xl. 2, 3.* And, for this, let others praise him also.

3. The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, *v. 4, 5.* The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarcely discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands, and the instruments of his providence; their bulk and power are very great, but *he calleth them all by their names*, which bespeaks his dominion over them, and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleases. They are his servants, his soldiers, he musters them, he marshals them, they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction. He mentions this as one instance of many, to show that *great is our Lord, and of great power*; he can do what he pleases, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length; hitherto his wisdom can reach, and no farther; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

4. The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud and exalting them of low degree; (*v. 6.*) *The Lord lifts up the meek*, who abase themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but *the wicked*, who carry it insolently toward God and scornfully toward all mankind, who lift up themselves in pride and folly, *he casteth down to the ground*, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, at furthest in the day when their faces shall be *filled with everlasting shame*. God proves himself to be God, by *looking on the proud and abasing them*, *Job xl. 12.*

5. The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, *v. 8, 9.* Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. (1.) *He covereth the heaven with clouds*, which darken the air, and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he *prepareth that rain for the earth* which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions, for the present, look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes, when the sky is overcast, it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to *yield the perceable fruits of*

righteousness, (*Heb. xii. 11.*) which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which directs us on earth to depend on God in heaven. All the rain, with which the earth is watered, is o. God's preparing. (2.) By the rain which distils on the earth, *he makes grass to grow upon the mountains*, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of, nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains, which are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the vallies are, are yet watered so that they are not barren. (3.) This grass *he gives to the beast for his food*, the beasts of the mountains, which run wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the *young ravens*, which, being forsaken by their old ones, *cry*, are heard by him, and ways are found to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

6. The complacency he takes in his people, *v. 10, 11.* In times when great things are doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceeds from the Lord) whom, and what, God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that God is pleased to own. (1.) Not the strength of armies; not in the cavalry, *for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse*, the war-horse, noted for his courage; (*Job xxxix. 19, &c.*) nor in the infantry, *for he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man*; he does not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them for charging, to stand the ground. If one king, making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, "Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order, it is pity that they should suffer any disgrace;" for that is no argument with God, *Ps. xx. 7.* Jehoshaphat's was much better, *Lord, we have no might, 2 Chron. xx. 12.* But, (2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace; a serious and suitable regard to God, is that which is, in the sight of God, of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts of, and *takes pleasure in*, those that *fear him, and that hope in his mercy*. Observe, [1.] A holy fear of God and hope in God, not only may consist, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of his majesty, and a complacency in his goodness; both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but we must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair; thus must we take our work before us. [2.] We must *hope in God's mercy*, his general mercy, even then when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. A humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute which he most glories in. Every man of honour loves to be trusted.

12. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. 13. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. 16. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. 17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

13. He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his judgments*, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Jerusalem, and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to *praise God*, v. 12. For where should praise be offered up to God, but where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him, but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites, who attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner, praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. "*Praise thy God, O Zion*: he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise."

Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

I. For the prosperity and flourishing estate of their civil interests, v. 13, 14. 1. For the common safety; they had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them, if God had not *strengthened the bars of their gates*, and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must, therefore, in the careful and diligent use of those means, depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land, more to the wall of fire, than to the wall of water, round about us, Zech. ii. 5. 2. For the increase of their people; this strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing; *He hath blessed thy children within thee*, with that first and great blessing, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land*. It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord, (Isa. lxi. 9.) and a comfort to the generation that is going off, to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful; for which blessing God must be blessed. 3. For the public tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war; *He maketh peace in thy borders*, by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities; and *upon thy borders*, that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country, the frontier-towns lie most exposed, so that if there be peace in the borders, there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. 4. For great plenty, the common effect of peace; *He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat*; wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fullness thereof. What would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat, (Deut. xxxii. 14.) and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, Ezek. xxvii. 17. The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones or spices, but with *the finest of the wheat*, with bread, which strengthens man's heart; that made it the glory of all lands, and for that God was praised in Zion.

II. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter-weather; he that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of

power from whom all the powers of nature are derived, and on whom they depend, and who produces all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

1. In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world, (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes,) they are produced by the will, and power, and providence, of God; (v. 15.) *He sendeth forth his commandments upon earth*, as one that has an incontestable authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders, and put them in execution. As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed, by a word of almighty power; *God speaks, and it is done*, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely, but speedily; *his word runneth very swiftly*, for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning, which passes through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, Luke xvii. 24. Angels, who carry his word, and fulfil it, *fly swiftly*, Dan. ix. 21.

2. In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

(1.) Frosts are from God; with him are the *treasures of the snow and the hail*, (Job xxxviii. 22, 23.) and out of these treasures he draws as he pleases [1.] *He giveth snow like wool*; it is compared to wool for its whiteness, (Isa. i. 18.) and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool, it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. [2.] *He scattereth the hoar-frost*, which is dew congealed, as the snow and hail are rain congealed; this looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth, and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, Ps. lxxviii. 47. [3.] *He casteth forth his ice like morsels*, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of drink, is now as morsels of meat, or crusts of bread. [4.] When we see the frost, and snow, and ice, we feel it in the air; *Who can stand before his cold?* The beasts cannot, they retire into dens, (Job xxxvii. 8.) they are easily conquered then, 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. Men cannot, but are forced to take the benefit of fires, or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it *his cold*, it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season, and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which appear in the winter-weather, which shall not cease more than summer, Gen. viii. 22. And let us also infer from it, If we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

(2.) Thaws are from God; when he pleases, (v. 18.) *he sendeth out his word, and melteth them*; the frost, the snow, the ice, are all dissolved quickly, in order to which he *causes the wind, the south wind, to blow, and the waters*, which were frozen, flow again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the First Cause. And in it we must take notice, not only of the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly, make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air, and the face of the earth; (what cannot he do, that doeth this every winter, perhaps often every

winter?) but also of the goodness of God; hard weather does not always continue, it would be sad if it should; he does not *contend for ever*, but *renews the face of the earth*. As he remembered Noah, and released him, (Gen. viii. 1.) so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, Cant. ii. 11, 12. This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ, (for the Spirit is compared to the wind, John iii. 8) both are sent for the melting of frozen souls; converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which, before, were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal, and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable: such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it, and restore it to itself.

III. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty, (v. 14.) as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them; they were under his peculiar government, the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting, their constitution was a theocracy; they had the benefit of divine revelation, the great things of God's law were written to them; they had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions. No people besides went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy; they did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but *God showed his word unto Jacob*, and by that word he made known to them his *statutes and judgments*. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them; *faith comes by hearing* and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging; *He hath not dealt so with every nation*, not with any nation; and *as for his judgments, they have not known them*, nor are likely to know them till the Messiah come, and take down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature. Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes, and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel were; let *Israel therefore praise the Lord* in the observation of these statutes; *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world? Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to show forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen. Thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise: he is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore does all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all who shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold, if they be not raised and enlarged, in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm. I. He calls upon the *higher house*, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively, (v. 1, 2.) and those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, v. 3-6. II. He calls upon the *lower house*, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise, (v. 7-10.) and those that, being endued with reason, are capable of offering up this sacrifice, (v. 11-13.)

especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other. v. 14.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarcely admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

I. That there is above us a world of blessed angels, by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them; *Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*; and it is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefitted by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist has an eye here, v. 1, 2. In general, *to the heavens, to the heights*; the heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world, unto God in the heavens, and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised in the heights; that, while we are so cold, and low, and flat, in praising God, there are those above who are doing it in a better manner, and that, while we are so often interrupted in this work, they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts, is plain enough; as soon as they were made, they were listed, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for. I will not say, They do not need it, for they are continually praising God, and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore, when, in singing this psalm, we call upon the angels to praise God, (as we did, ciii. 20.) we mean, that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and in the best manner; that we are sure it is fit he should be so; that we are pleased to think he is so; and that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the *innumerable company of angels*, Heb. xii. 22.

II. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and these bright ones, in which God is praised, which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of

their being, out of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

1. What these creatures are that thus show us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises. (1.) There are the *sun, moon, and stars*, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the *Father of lights*, v. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him; and the praises of the lesser lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we, who worship the true God, make them only our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites to attend us, who, as priests, offer the spiritual sacrifice. (2.) There are the *heavens of heavens* above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for the *heavens of heavens are the Lord's*, (cxv. 16.) and yet they cannot contain him, 1 Kings viii. 27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands here, by the *heavens of heavens*, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as Ps. lxxviii. 33. We read of the heaven of heavens, whence God sends forth his voice, and that a *mighty voice*, meaning the thunder. (3.) There are the *waters that be above the heavens*, the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that depend on the word of him which is above the heavens*; for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God has in his hand, wherewith he opens, and none can shut, he shuts, and none can open.

2. Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them; *Let them praise the name of the Lord*; let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. (1.) Because he made them, gave them their powers, and assigned them their places; *He commanded them* (great as they are) out of nothing, and *they were created* at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spake with such authority. (2.) Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their powers and motions; (v. 6.) *He hath established them for ever and ever*, to the end of time; a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. *He hath made a decree*, the law of creation, *which shall not pass*; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore needs not be altered; by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation, must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him, that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps. 3. Fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: 9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful

trees, and all cedars: 10. Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: 11. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12. Both young men and maidens; old men and children: 13. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to inquire after those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this, (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it,) that even in this world, dark and as bad as it is, God is praised; *Praise ye the Lord from the earth*, v. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth, so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

1. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, v. 7.-10. Let the *dragons or whales*, that sport themselves in the mighty waters, (civ. 26.) dance before the Lord, to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence, by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, Job xli. 1, &c. *All deeps*, and their inhabitants, praise God; the sea, and the animals there; the bowels of the earth, and the animals there. *Out of the depths* God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere, we meet with a great variety of meteors, which, being a kind of new productions, (and some of them unaccountable,) do, in a special manner, magnify the power of the great Creator. There are *fiery* meteors, lightning is *fire*, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled, which may be so called; there are *watery* meteors, *hail and snow*, and the *vapours* of which they are gendered; there are *airy* meteors, *stormy winds*; we know not whence they come, nor whither they go; whence their mighty force comes, nor how it is spent; but this we know, that, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that, and no more than he appoints them; and by this Christ showed himself to have a divine power, that he *commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him*. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth, (v. 9.) and there are presented to our view the exalted *grounds, mountains, and all hills*; from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise; there are the exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the *fruitful trees* of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised; others by their stateliness, as *all cedars*, those *trees of the Lord*, civ. 16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the *beasts* that run wild, and *all cattle* that are tame and in the service of man, v. 10. Nay, even the *creeping things* are not sunk so low, nor do the *flying fowl* soar so high, as not to be called upon to *praise the Lord*. Much of the

wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them, and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

2. Much more, those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason, ought to employ them in praising God. *Kings of the earth and all people*, v. 11, 12. (1.) God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and he makes what use he pleases of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans*—the part that commands, and the *pars subdita*—the part that is subject; *kings of the earth, and all people*. It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the *princes and judges of the earth* have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the Founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. (2.) God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. [1.] Those of each rank, high and low; the praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those on whom God has put honour, must honour him with it; and the power they are intrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, put them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God, and doing him more service, than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude. [2.] Those of each sex, *young men and maidens*, who make merry together, let them turn it into this channel, let the mirth be sacred, that it may be pure. [3.] Those of each age; *old men* must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and *children* too must begin betimes to praise God; even *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings* this good work is perfected. A good reason is given (v. 13.) why all these should praise the name of the Lord, because *his name alone is excellent*, and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name; no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency. *His glory is above both the earth and the heaven*, and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise.

3. Most of all, his own people, that are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, v. 14. Observe, (1.) The dignity God has put upon *his people, even the children of Israel*, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. *He exalts their horn*, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were, in many respects, honoured above any other nation, for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. It was their own honour, that they were a *people near unto God*, his *Segullah*, his *peculiar treasure*; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him *nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for*. This blessing is now come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for they that were *afar off*, by his blood are made *nigh*, Eph. ii. 13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man, to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all, when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory. (2.) The duty God expects from them in consideration of

this; Let those whom God honours, honour him; *Praise ye the Lord*. Let him be the *Praise of all his saints*, the Object of their praise; for he is a Praise to them. *He is thy praise, and he is thy God*, Deut. x. 21. Some by the *horn of his people* understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a *Prince and a Saviour*, who is indeed the Praise of all his saints, and will be so forever; for it is through him that they are a *people near to God*.

PSALM CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator this to the Redeemer. It is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably, it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed and honoured with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the stronghold of Zion, and settled his government there. But it looks further, to the kingdom of the Messiah, who, in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, goes forth conquering and to conquer. To him, and his graces and glories, we must have an eye, in singing this psalm, which speaks, I. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, v. 1. 5. II. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, v. 6. 9.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praises in the congregation of saints. 2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. 4. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

1. The calls given God's Israel to praise. *All his works were*, in the foregoing psalm, excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then,

1. Who are called upon to praise God. *Israel* in general, the body of the church, (v. 2.) *the children of Zion* particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near them, that are not put to travel far to them, are justly expected to do more in praising God than others. All true Christians may call themselves *the children of Zion*, for in faith and hope we are come unto mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification; they are therefore devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise.

2. What must be the principle of this praise; and that is, holy joy in God; *Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory*. Our praises of God should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart consists in making God our chief Joy, and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. We then give honour to God, when we take pleasure in him. We must be *joyful in glory*, in him as our Glory, and in the interest we have in him; and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of the praise. We must, by all proper ways, show forth the praises

of God; *Sing to the Lord*. We must entertain ourselves, and proclaim his name, by *singing praises unto him*, (v. 3.) *singing aloud*, (v. 5.) for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a *new song*, newly composed upon every special occasion; sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keep them from growing threadbare. Let God be *praised in the dance with timbrel and harp*; according to the usage of the Old Testament church very early, (Exod. xv. 20.) where we find God praised with *timbrels and dances*. They who from hence urge the use of music in religious worship, must by the same rule introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and Judg. xxi. 21. But whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel-ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel-canon for psalmody, is, to *sing with the spirit and with the understanding*.

4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God; none must be let slip; but particularly, (1.) We must praise God in public, in the *solemn assembly*, (v. 1.) *in the congregation of saints*; the more the better, it is the more like heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principle, end, and design, of our coming together in religious assemblies, is, that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. (2.) We must praise him in private. *Let the saints* be so transported with their joy in God, as to *sing aloud upon their beds*, when they awake in the night, full of the praises of God, as David, cxix. 62. When God's Israel are brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers, that are entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud, for joy of that. Upon their sick-beds, their death-beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

II. The cause given God's Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel their being as a people, as a church; made them what they were, so much different from other nations; let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might *show forth his praise*, Isa. xliii. 21. Let Israel *rejoice in his Makers*, so it is in the original; for God said, *Let us make man*; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity.

2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them, he is their King; he that gave being, no doubt, may give law; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful King. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for behold, thy King cometh*, the King Messiah, whom God has *set upon his holy hill of Zion*; let all the children of Zion be *joyful* in him, and go forth to meet him with their hosannas, Zech. ix. 9.

3. God's delight in them. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised; for *the Lord takes pleasure in his people*, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself,

and to whose fidelity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to *take pleasure in his people*, cxlvii. 11.

4. God's designs concerning them. Beside the present complacency he has in them, he has prepared for their future glory; *He will beautify the meek*, the humble, and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word, and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions, and *show all meekness towards all men*. These, men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach, nay, he will beautify them, they shall appear not only clear, but comely, before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation; with temporal salvations; when God works remarkable deliverances for his people, they that had *been among the pots, become as the wings of a dove covered with silver*, (lxviii. 13.) but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day, when they *shine forth as the sun*. In the hopes of this, let them now, in the darkest day, *sing a new song*.

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and a two-edged sword in their hand;
7. *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people*;
8. *To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron*;
9. *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.*

The Israel of God are here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise, (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs,) and the recompense of their praise; they that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity, shall be blessed with victory. Or it may be taken as a further expression of their praise; (v. 6.) *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and then, in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take a *two-edged sword in their hand*, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom.

Now this may be applied,

1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan, and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who, when they taught Israel *the high praises of the Lord*, did withal put a *two-edged sword in their hand*; David did so too, for as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow, (2 Sam. i. 18.) taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they *executed vengeance upon the heathen*, (the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, 2 Sam. viii. 1, &c.) and *punishments upon the people*, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, v. 7. Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners, (v. 8.) and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God, and to him who put it upon them they return it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time *the high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand*, for they went forth to war, singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2 Chron. xx. 23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees

when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that character, be thus severe, and upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it, it is *the judgment written*.

They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth, that shall be employed in the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon, will but *execute the judgment written*, Rev. xvii. 16, 17. But, since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violence either of subjects against their princes, or of princes against their subjects, or both against their neighbours, under pretence of religion; for Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth, with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

2. To Christ's victories, by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the *two-edged sword*, (Heb. iv. 12.) the *sword of the Spirit*, (Eph. vi. 17.) which it is not enough to have in our armoury, we must have it in our hand also, as our Master had, when he said, *It is written*. Now, (1.) With this *two-edged sword* the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the power of darkness; vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers, and by the consternation and confusion of those that would not repent; (Rev. vi. 15.) the strong-holds of Satan were cast down; (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix; Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him. *This is the honour of all Christians*, that their holy religion has been so victorious. (2.) With this *two-edged sword* believers fight against their own corruptions, and through the grace of God, subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet; *This honour have all the saints*. (3.) The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with *ten thousand of his saints*, to *execute judgment upon all*, Jude, v. 14, 15. Vengeance shall then be *executed upon the heathen*, (Ps. ix. 17.) and *punishments*, everlasting punishments, *upon the people: kings and nobles*, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government, (ii. 3.) shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be *executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the gospel*. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall *judge the world*; (1 Cor. vi. 2.) in the prospect of that, let them *praise the Lord*, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to the end of their lives.

PSALM CL.

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable: but the scope of them is very different; the first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and, perhaps, was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to show what is the design

of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God; and here he would fain fill all the world with them: again and again he calls, *Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him*, no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shows, I. For what, and upon what account, God is to be praised, v. 1, 2. II. How, and with what expressions of joy, God is to be praised, v. 3. 5. III. Who must praise the Lord; it is every one's business, v. 6. In singing this psalm, we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God, and the praises with which he is, and shall be, for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

1. **PRAISE** ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. 6. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

We are here with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, it was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeated inculcating of the call thus, intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed, and much enlarged, in; but which we are naturally backward to, and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to, and held to, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

1. Whence this tribute of praise arises, and out of what part of his dominion it especially issues.

It comes, (1.) From *his sanctuary*; praise him there: let his priests, let his people that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he does, in a special manner, both manifest his glory, and communicate his grace? *Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary*, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, Ezek. xxxvii. 26. *Praise God in his holy ones*, so some read it: we must take notice of the image of God, as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and, when we praise them, we must praise God in them. (2.) From *the firmament of his power*; *Praise him*, because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament; its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth. Let them that have their dwelling in the *firmament of his power*, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some, by the *sanctuary*, as well as by *the firmament of his power*, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

2. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due: upon many accounts; particularly, (1.) The works of his power; (v. 2.) *Praise him for his mighty acts*; for *his mightinesses*, so the word is; for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace; what he has done in the

creation, government, and redemption, of the world; for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular. (2.) The glory and majesty of his being; *Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence*; (so Dr. Hammond reads it;) not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite; but, because he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men; *Deus non patitur hyperbolum—We cannot speak hyperbolically of God*; all the danger is of saying too little; and therefore, when we have done our utmost, we must own, that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, *his excellent greatness*.

3. In what manner this tribute must be paid; with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, *v. 3-5*. It is well that we are not concerned to inquire what sort of instruments each of these was; it is enough that they were well known then: our concern is, to know, (1.) That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. (2.) That in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. (3.) That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections; *non musica chordula, sed cor—not a melodious string, but a melodious heart*. Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire toward him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and selacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory. (4.) That various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help, one another. The New-Testament concert, instead of this, is, *with one mind, and one mouth, to glorify*, Rom. xv. 6.

4. Who must pay this tribute; (*v. 6*.) *Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord*. He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary, and were employed in the temple-service; but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and *in every place*, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered*, Mal. i. 11. Some think that in *every thing that has breath*, here we must include the inferior creatures, (as Gen. vii. 22.) all in *whose nostrils was the breath of life*. They praise God according to their capacity: the singing of birds is a sort of

praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, "We would praise God if we could, do you do it for us." John in vision heard a song of praise from *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth*, Rev. v. 13. Others think that the children of men only are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner *breathed the breath of life*, and they are become *living souls*. Gen. ii. 7. Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached to *every creature*, to every *human creature*, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? Prayers are called our *breathings*, Lam. iii. 56. Let every one that breathes toward God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our clement; let it be to us as the air we *breathe in*, which we could not live without. Having our *breath in our nostrils*, let us consider that it is still *going forth*, and will shortly go, and not return. Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord; and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and, when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state, to breathe God's praises in a freer better air.

The three first of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with *Amen and Amen*; the fourth with *Amen, Hallelujah*; but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes only with *Hallelujah*, because the six last psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. And musical instruments, here said to be used, are no more to be understood literally than the gold, and pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 18, 19. But as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness. Hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth, as they do it that are in heaven. And therefore let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work, because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. *Hallelujah* is the word there; (Rev. xix. 1, 3.) let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. *Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord*.