**÷Preface**

My Preface shall at least possess the virtue of brevity, as I find it difficult to impart to it any other.  
The Exposition here given is my own. I consulted a few authors before penning it, to aid me in interpretation and arouse my thoughts; but, still I can claim originality for my comments, at least so I honestly think. Whether they are better or worse for that, I know not; at least I know I have sought heavenly guidance while writing them, and therefore I look for a blessing on the printing of them.  
One thing the reader will please clearly to understand, and I beg him to bear it in mind; *I am far from endorsing all I have quoted*. I am neither responsible for the scholarship or orthodoxy of the writers. The names are given that each author may bear his own burden; and a variety of writers have been quoted that the thoughts of many minds might be before the reader. Still I trust nothing evil has been admitted; if it be so it is an oversight.  
The Hints to the Village Preacher are very simple, and an apology is due to my ministerial readers for inserting them, but I humbly hope they may render assistance to those for whom alone they are designed, viz., lay preachers whose time is much occupied, and whose attainments are slender.  
It may be added, that although the comments were the work of my health, the rest of the volume is the product of my sickness. When protracted illness and weakness laid me aside from daily preaching, I resorted to my pen as an available means of doing good. I would have preached had I been able, but as my Master denied me the privilege of thus serving him, I gladly availed myself of the other method of bearing testimony for his name. O that he may give me fruit in this field also, and his shall be all the praise.

*Clapham, December, 1869*

**÷Psalm 1 (**Psa 1:1-6**)**

[Exposition](treasury\\ps001.htm)  
[Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings](treasury\\ps001.htm)  
[Hints to the Village Preacher](treasury\\ps001.htm)  
[Other Works](treasury\\ps001.htm)

TITLE. *This Psalm may be regarded as* THE PREFACE PSALM, *having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book. It is the psalmists's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners. This, then, is the matter of the first Psalm, which may be looked upon, in some respects, as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms make up a divine sermon.*

DIVISION. *This Psalm consists of two parts: in the first (from verse 1 to the end of the 3rd) David sets out wherein the felicity and blessedness of a godly man consisteth, what his exercises are, and what blessings he shall receive from the Lord. In the second part (from verse 4 to the end) he contrasts the state and character of the ungodly, reveals the future, and describes, in telling language, his ultimate doom.*

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *"BLESSED"*—see how this Book of Psalms opens with a benediction, even as did the famous Sermon of our Lord upon the Mount! The word translated "blessed" is a very expressive one. The original word is plural, and it is a controverted matter whether it is an adjective or a substantive. Hence we may learn the multiplicity of the blessings which shall rest upon the man whom God hath justified, and the perfection and greatness of the blessedness he shall enjoy. We might read it, "Oh, the blessednesses!" and we may well regard it (as Ainsworth does) as a joyful acclamation of the gracious man's felicity. May the like benediction rest on us!  
When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely *walk* in the counsel of the careless and *ungodly,* who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they *stand* in the way of open *sinners* who wilfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they *sit in the seat of the scornful.* They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed, and are looked up to by others as Masters in Belial. But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers; he puts away evil things from him as garments spotted by the flesh; he comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners.  
Well may the saints long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there, *"nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."* All our congregations upon earth are mixed. Every Church hath one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints, as dross mingles with gold. God's precious diamonds still lie in the same field with pebbles. Righteous Lots are this side heaven continually vexed by the men of Sodom. Let us rejoice then, that in "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" above, there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities. May God grant that we may have a name and a place in his courts above!

Verse 6. Or, as the Hebrew hath it yet more fully, "The Lord is *knowing* the way of the righteous." He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knoweth it. If it be in the clouds and tempest of affliction, he understandeth it. He numbereth the hairs of our head; he will not suffer any evil to befall us. "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10.) *"But the way of the ungodly shall perish."* Not only shall *they* perish themselves, but *their way* shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity; but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very "way" of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity.  
This whole Psalm offers itself to be drawn into these two opposite propositions: a godly man is blessed, a wicked man is miserable; which seem to stand as two challenges, made by the prophet: one, that he will maintain a godly man against all comers, to be the only Jason for winning the golden fleece of blessedness; the other, that albeit the ungodly make a show in the world of being happy, yet they of all men are most miserable.—*Sir Richard Baker,* 1640  
The *sinner* has his particular *way* of transgressing; one is a *drunkard,* another *dishonest,* another *unclean.* Few are given to every species of vice. There are many *covetous* men who abhor *drunkenness,* many *drunkards* who abhor *covetousness;* and so of others. *Each has his easily besetting sin;* therefore, says the prophet, *"Let the wicked* forsake HIS WAY." (Isaiah 55:7) Now, *blessed is he who stands not is such a man's* WAY.  
1. An attractive faculty, to assume and draw in the food;  
3. As assimilating faculty to concoct the nourishment;   
This shows the vehement tempest of death, which sweeps away the soul of the ungodly.

*Verse* 5. *"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,"* etc. And may not a reason also be conceived thus, why the ungodly can never come to be of the congregation of the righteous: the righteous go a way that God knows, and the wicked go a way that God destroys; and seeing that these ways can never meet, how should the men meet that go these ways? And to make sure work that they shall never meet indeed, the prophet expresseth the way of the righteous by the first link of the chain of God's goodness, which is his *knowledge;* but expresseth the way of the wicked by the last link of God's justice, which is his *destroying;* and though God's justice and his mercy do often meet, and are contiguous one to another, yet the first link of his mercy and the last link of his justice can never meet, for it never comes to destroying till God be heard to say *Nescio vos,* *"I know you not,"* and *nescio vos* in God, and God's knowledge, can certainly never possibly meet together. *Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse* 5. The Irish air will sooner brook a toad, or a snake, than heaven a sinner. *John Trapp.*

*Verse* 6. *"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."* Behold how David here terrifies us away from all prosperous appearances, and commends to us various temptations and adversities. For this "way" of the righteous all men utterly reprobate; thinking also, that God knoweth nothing about any such way. But this is the wisdom of the cross. Therefore, it is God alone that knoweth the way of the righteous, so hidden is it to the righteous themselves. For his right hand leads them on in a wonderful manner, seeing that it is a way, not of sense, nor of reason, but of faith only; even of that faith that sees in darkness, and beholds things that are invisible. *Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 6. *"The righteous."* They that endeavour righteous living in themselves and have Christ's righteousness imputed to them. *Thomas Wilcocks,* 1586.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

*Verse* 1. May furnish an excellent text upon "Progress in Sin," or "The Purity of the Christian," or "The Blessedness of the Righteous." Upon the last subject speak of the believer as BLESSED—  
2. In Christ;  
4. In all circumstances;  
6. To the highest degree.

*Verse* 1. Teaches a godly man to beware, (1) of the opinions, (2) of the practical life, and (3) of the company and association of sinful men. Show how meditation upon the Word will assist us in keeping aloof from these three evils.  
1. The believer's delight in it.  
II. What there is in it for the believer to delight in.  
I. Where it grows.  
III. What it yields.  
I. The origination of Christian life, *"planted."*  
III. The fruit expected from it.

*Verse* 3. Influence of religion upon prosperity.—*Blair.*  
*"Fruit in his season;"* virtues to be exhibited at certain seasons— patience in affliction; gratitude in prosperity; zeal in opportunity, etc.  
Sin puts a negative on every blessing.

*Verse* 5. The sinner's double doom.  
2. Separated from the saints.  
*"The congregation of the righteous"* viewed as the church of the first-born above. This may furnish a noble topic.

*Verse* 6. (*first sentence*). A sweet encouragement to the tried people of God. The knowledge here meant.  
2. *Its source.*—It is caused by omniscience and infinite love.  
￹FPRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "3. *Its results.*—Support, deliverance, acceptance, and glory at last.

*Verse* 6. (*last clause*). His way of pleasure, of pride, of unbelief, of profanity, of persecution, of procrastinating, of self-deception, etc.: all these shall come to an end.

WORKS UPON THE FIRST PSALM

*The Way to Blessedness:* a Commentary on the First Psalm. By PHINEAS FLETCHER. London. 1632

*A Discourse about the State of True Happiness*, delivered in certain Sermons in Oxford, and at Paul's Cross. By ROBERT BOLTON. London. 1625

*David's Blessed Man; or, a Short Exposition on the First Psalm, directing a Man to True Happiness.* By SAMUEL SMITH, preacher of the Word at Prittlewell in Essex. 1635 [Reprinted in Nicol's Series of Commentaries.]

*Meditations and Disquisitions upon the First Psalm of David.—Blessed is the Man.* By SIR RICHARD BAKER, Knight. London. 1640 [The same volume contains Meditations upon "Seven Consolatorie Psalms of David," namely, 23, 27, 30, 84, 103, and 116.]

*The Christian on the Mount; or a Treatise concerning Meditation;* wherein the necessity, usefulness, and excellency of Meditation are at large discussed. By THOMAS WATSON. 1660.

**÷Psalm 2** Psa 2:1-12

[Exposition](treasury\\ps002.htm)  
[Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings](treasury\\ps002.htm)  
[Hints to the Village Preacher](treasury\\ps002.htm)  
[Other Works](treasury\\ps002.htm)

TITLE. *We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it* THE PSALM OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE; *for it sets forth, as in a wondrous vision, the tumult of the people against the Lord's anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt his own Son, and the ultimate reign of that Son over all his enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith, beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all his enemies. Lowth has the following remarks upon this Psalm: "The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his enemies, is the subject of the Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and allegorical. If we read over the Psalm, first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is obvious, and put beyond all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in the expression and sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as it were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to the contemplation of higher and more important matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the Psalm as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a noble series of events immediately rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as more exalted. The colouring which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer appear so when laid upon his great Antitype. After we have thus attentively considered the subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses very distinct from each other, yet conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the original from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology, fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiments, till, gradually ascending from things below to things above, from human affairs to those that are Divine, they bear the great important theme upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven."*

DIVISION. *This Psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture. (In verses 1, 2, 3) the Nations are raging; (4 to 6) the Lord in heaven derides them; (7 to 9) the Son proclaims the decree; and (from 10 to end) advice is given to the kings to yield obedience to the Lord's anointed. This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic form of the Psalm, which naturally falls into four stanzas of three verses each.*

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. We have, in these first three verses, a description of the hatred of human nature against the Christ of God. No better comment is needed upon it than the apostolic song in Act 4:27-28 : "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." The Psalm begins abruptly with an angry interrogation; and well it may: it is surely but little to be wondered at, that the sight of creatures in arms against their God should amaze the psalmist's mind. We see the *heathen raging,* roaring like the sea, tossed to and fro with restless waves, as the ocean in a storm; and then we mark the people in their hearts *imagining a vain thing* against God. Where there is much rage there is generally some folly, and in this case there is an excess of it. Note, that the commotion is not caused by the people only, but their leaders foment the rebellion. *"The kings of the earth set themselves."* In determined malice they arrayed themselves in opposition against God. It was not temporary rage, but deep-seated hate, for they *set themselves* resolutely to withstand the Prince of Peace. *"And the rulers take counsel together."* They go about their warfare craftily, not with foolish haste, but deliberately. They use all the skill which art can give. Like Pharaoh, they cry, "Let us deal wisely with them." O that men were half as careful in God's service to serve him wisely, as his enemies are to attack his kingdom craftily. Sinners have their wits about them, and yet saints are dull. But what say they? what is the meaning of this commotion? *"Let us break their bands asunder."* "Let us be free to commit all manner of abominations. Let us be our own gods. Let us rid ourselves of all restraint." Gathering impudence by the traitorous proposition of rebellion, they add—*"let us cast away;"* as if it were an easy matter — "let us fling off *'their cords from us.'*" What! O ye kings, do ye think yourselves Samsons? and are the bands of Omnipotence but as green withs before you? Do you dream that you shall snap to pieces and destroy the mandates of God—the decrees of the Most High—as if they were but tow? and do ye say, "Let us cast away their cords from us?" Yes! There are monarchs who have spoken thus, and there are still rebels upon thrones. However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway: the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?

Verse 4. Let us now turn our eyes from the wicked counsel-chamber and raging tumult of man, to the secret place of the majesty of the Most High. What doth God say? What will the King do unto the men who reject his only-begotten Son, the Heir of all things?  
God has laughed at the counsel and ravings of the wicked, and now Christ the Anointed himself comes forward, as the Risen Redeemer, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:4. Looking into the angry faces of the rebellious kings, the Anointed One seems to say, "If this sufficeth not to make you silent, *'I will declare the decree'*." Now this decree is directly in conflict with the device of man, for its tenour is the establishment of the very dominion against which the nations are raving. *"Thou art my Son."* Here is a noble proof of the glorious Divinity of our Immanuel. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" What a mercy to have a Divine Redeemer in whom to rest our confidence! *"This day have I begotten thee."* If this refers to the Godhead of our Lord, let us not attempt to fathom it, for it is a great truth, a truth reverently to be received, but not irreverently to be scanned. It may be added, that if this relates to the Begotten One in his human nature, we must here also rejoice in the mystery, but not attempt to violate its sanctity by intrusive prying into the secrets of the Eternal God. The things which are revealed are enough, without venturing into vain speculations. In attempting to define the Trinity, or unveil the essence of Divinity, many men have lost themselves: here great ships have foundered. What have we to do in such a sea with our frail skiffs?

Verse 8. *"Ask of me."* It was a custom among great kings, to give to favoured ones whatever they might ask. (See Est 5:6; Mat 14:7.) So Jesus hath but to ask and have. Here he declares that his very enemies are his inheritance. To their face he declares this decree, and "Lo! here," cries the Anointed One, as he holds aloft in that once pierced hand the sceptre of his power, "He hath given me this, not only the right to be a king, but the power to conquer." Yes! Jehovah hath given to his Anointed a rod of iron with which he shall break rebellious nations in pieces, and, despite their imperial strength, they shall be but as potters' vessels, easily dashed into shivers, when the rod of iron is in the hand of the omnipotent Son of God. Those who will not bend must break. Potters' vessels are not to be restored if dashed in pieces, and the ruin of sinners will be hopeless if Jesus shall smite them.

"Ye sinners seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there."

Verse 10. The scene again changes, and counsel is given to those who have taken counsel to rebel. They are exhorted to obey, and give the kiss of homage and affection to him whom they have hated.  
The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff; in the second Psalm we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and here, we contemplate Christ the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for *he* is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust; while he himself gives a blessing to all those who put their trust in him. The two Psalms are worthy of the very deepest attention; they are, in fact, the preface to the entire Book of Psalms, and were by some of the ancients, joined into one. They are, however, two Psalms; for Paul speaks of this as the second Psalm. (Act 13:33.) The first shows us the character and lot of the righteous; and the next teaches us that the Psalms are Messianic, and speak of Christ the Messiah—the Prince who shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. That they have both a far-reaching prophetic outlook we are well assured, but we do not feel competent to open up that matter, and must leave it to abler hands.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

*Verse* 1. *"Why do nations make a noise,"* tumultuate, or rage? The Hebrew verb is not expressive of an internal feeling, but of the outward agitation which denotes it. There may be an allusion to the rolling and roaring of the sea, often used as an emblem of popular commotion, both in the Scriptures and the classics. The past tense of this verb (*Why have they raged?*) refers to the commotion as already begun, while the future in the next clause expresses its continuance. *J. A. Alexander, D.D.,* 1850.

*Verse* 1. *"Rage."* The word with which Paul renders this in the Greek denotes rage, pride, and restiveness, as of horses that neigh, and rush into the battle. 'Efruaxag, from Fruassw, to snort or neigh, properly applied to a high-mettled horse. See Acts 4:25.

*Verse* 1. *"A vain thing."* A medal was struck by Diocletian, which still remains, bearing the inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished." And in Spain, two monumental pillars were raised, on which were written:—I. "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti, for having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the Republic to ruin." II. "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti, for having adopted Galerius in the east, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods." As a modern writer has elegantly observed: "We have here a monument raised by Paganism, over the grave of its vanquished foe. But in this 'the people imagined a vain thing;' so far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph, and the stone guarded a sepulchre empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears. Neither in Spain, nor elsewhere, can be pointed out the burial place of Christianity; it is not, for the living have no tomb.'"

*Verses* 1-4. Herod, the fox, plotted against Christ, to hinder the course of his ministry and mediatorship, but he could not perform his enterprise; 'tis so all along, therefore it is said, *"Why do the heathen imagine a vain thing?"* A vain thing, because a thing successless, their hands could not perform it. It was vain, not only because there was no true ground of reason why they should imagine or do such a thing, but vain also because they laboured in vain, they could not do it, and therefore it follows, *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."* The Lord sees what fools they are, and men (yea, themselves) shall see it. The prophet gives us a elegant description to this purpose. Isaiah 59:5, 6. *"They weave the spider's web* . . . *Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works."* As if he had said, they have been devising and setting things in a goodly frame to catch flies; they have been spinning a fine thread out of their brains, as the spider doth out of her bowels; such is their web, but when they have their web they cannot cut it out, or make it up into a garment. They shall go naked and cold, notwithstanding all their spinning and weaving, all their plotting and devising. The next broom that comes will sweep away all their webs and the spiders too, except they creep apace. God loves and delights to cross worldly proverbs and worldly craft. *Joseph Caryl,* 1647.

*Verse* 2. The many had done their part, and now the *mighty* show themselves. *John Trapp.*

*Verse* 2. *"They banded themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed."* But why did they band themselves against the Lord, or against his Anointed? What was their desire of him? To have his goods? No, he had none for himself; but they were richer than he. To have his liberty? Nay, that would not suffice them, for they had bound him before. To bring the people unto dislike of him? Nay, that would not serve them, for they had done so already, until even his disciples were fled from him. What would they have, then? his blood? Yea, "they took counsel," saith Matthew, "to put him to death." They had the devil's mind, which is not satisfied but with death. And how do they contrive it? He saith, "they took counsel about it." *Henry Smith,* 1578

*Verse* 2. *"Against Jehovah and against his Anointed."* What an honour it was to David to be thus publicly associated with Jehovah! And because he was HIS anointed, to be an object of hatred and scorn to the ungodly world! If this very circumstance fearfully augmented the guilt, and sealed the doom of these infatuated heathen, surely it was that which above everything else would preserve the mind of David calm and serene, yea, peaceful and joyful notwithstanding the proud and boastful vauntiness of his enemies. . . .When writing this Psalm David was like a man in a storm, who hears only the roaring of the tempest, or sees nothing but the raging billows threatening destruction on every side of him. And yet his faith enabled him to say, *"The people imagine a vain thing."* They cannot succeed. They cannot defeat the counsels of heaven. They cannot injure the Lord's Anointed. *David Pitcairn,* 1851.

*Verse* 3. Resolved they were to run riot, as lawless, and aweless, and therefore they slander the sweet laws of Christ's kingdom as bonds and thick cords, which are signs of slavery. Jeremiah 27: 2, 6, 7. But what saith our Saviour? "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is no more burden to a regenerate man than wings to a bird. The law of Christ is no more as bands and cords, but as girdles and garters which gird up his loins and expedite his course. *John Trapp.*

*Verse* 4. *"He that sitteth in the heavens."* Hereby it is clearly intimated, (1) that the Lord is far above all their malice and power, (2) that he seeth all their plots, looking down on all; (3) that he is of omnipotent power, and so can do with his enemies as he lists. "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he pleased." Psalm 115:3. *Arthur Jackson,* 1643.

*Verse* 4. *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,"* etc. 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. *Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 4. *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."* They scoff at us, God laughs at them. Laugh? This seems a hard word at the first view: are the injuries of his saints, the cruelties of their enemies, the derision, the persecution of all that are round about us, no more but matter of laughter? Severe Cato thought that laughter did not become the gravity of Roman consuls; that it is a diminution of states, as another told princes, and it is attributed to the Majesty of heaven? According to our capacities, the prophet describes God, as ourselves would be in a merry disposition, deriding vain attempts. He laughs, but it is in scorn; he scorns, but it is with vengeance. Pharaoh imagined that by drowning the Israelite males, he had found a way to root their name from the earth; but when at the same time, his own daughter, in his own court gave princely education to Moses, their deliverer, did not God Laugh?  
*First*, Christ is his enemies' King, that is, he is King over his enemies. Christ is a King above all kings. What are all the mighty men, the great, the honourable men of the earth to Jesus Christ? They are but like a little bubble in the water; for if all the nations, in comparison to God, be but as the drop of the bucket, or the dust of the balance, as the prophet speaks in Isaiah 40:15, how little then must be the kings of the earth! Nay, beloved, Christ Jesus is not only higher than kings, but he is higher than the angels; yea, he is the head of angels, and, therefore, all the angels in heaven are commanded to worship him. Colossians 2:12; Hebrews 1:6. . . . . He is King over all kingdoms, over all nations, over all governments, over all powers, over all people. Daniel 7:14. . . . . The very heathen are given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Psalm 2:8.  
*Thirdly.* Jesus Christ is his Father's King too, and so his Father calls him: *"I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."* Well may he be our King, when he is God's King. But you may say, how is Christ the Father's King? Because he rules for his Father. There is a twofold kingdom of God committed to Jesus Christ; *first*, a spiritual kingdom, by which he rules in the hearts of his people, and so is King of saints; and, *secondly*, a providential kingdom, by which he rules the affairs of this world, and so he is King of nations. *Condensed from William Dyer's Christ's Famous Titles,* 1665.

*Verse* 6. *"Zion."* The *name* "Zion" signifies a "distant view" (*speculam*). And the church is called "a distant view" (*specula*), not only because it views God and heavenly things by faith (that is, afar off), being wise unto the things that are above, not unto those that are of the earth; but also, because there are within her true viewers, or seers, and watchmen in the spirit, whose office is to take charge of the people under them, and to watch against the snares of enemies and sins; and such are called in the Greek bishops (*episkopoi*), that is, spyers or seers; and you may for the same reason give them, from the Hebrew, the appellation of Zionists or Zioners. *Martin Luther.*

*Verse* 7. The dispute concerning the eternal filiation of our Lord betrays more of presumptuous curiosity than of reverent faith. It is an attempt to explain where it is far better to adore. We could give rival expositions of this verse, but we forbear. The controversy is one of the most unprofitable which ever engaged the pens of theologians. *C. H. S.*

*Verse* 8. *"Ask of me."* The priesthood doth not appear to be settled upon Christ by any other expression than this, "Ask of me." The Psalm speaks of his investiture in his kingly office; the apostle refers this to his priesthood, his commission for both took date at the same time; both bestowed, both confirmed by the same authority. The office of asking is grounded upon the same authority as the honour of king. Ruling belonged to his royal office, asking to his priestly. After his resurrection, the Father gives him a power and command of asking. *Stephen Charnock.*

*Verse* 8. As the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that he can, so God looks on Christ as the archtype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, in glory; yet so that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer, because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head; yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore so shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree; an image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that engraved on gold. Now, our conformity to Christ appears, that as the promises made to him were performed upon his prayers to his Father, his promises made to his saints are given to them in the same way of prayer: *"Ask of me,"* saith God to his Son, *"and I shall give thee."* And the apostle tells us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." God hath promised support to Christ in all his conflicts. Isaiah 42:1. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold;" yet he prayed "with strong cries and tears," when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies, yet for both these he prays. Christ toward us acts as a king, but toward his Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is by prayer and intercession. So the saints, the promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests toward God, by prayer humbly to sue out these great things given in the promise. *William Gurnall,* 1617-1679.

*Verse* 8. It will be observed in our Bible that two words of verse eight are in italics, intimating that they are not translations of the Hebrew, but additions made for the purpose of elucidating the meaning. Now if the *"thee"* and the *"for"* are left out, the verse will read thus, "Ask of me, and I shall give the heathen, thine inheritance, and thy possession, the uttermost parts of the earth." And this reading is decidedly preferable to the other. It implies that by some previous arrangement on the part of God, he had already assigned an inheritance of the heathen, and the possession of the earth, to the person of whom he says, "Thou art my Son." And when God says, "I will give," etc., he reveals to his Anointed, not so much in what the inheritance consisted, and what was the extent of possession destined for him, as the promise of his readiness to bestow it. The heathen were already "the inheritance," and the ends of the earth "the possession," which God had *purposed* to give to his Anointed. Now he says to him, "Ask of me," and he *promises* to fulfil his purpose. This is the idea involved in the words of the text, and the importance of it will become more apparent, when we consider its application to the *spiritual* David, to the true Son of God, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

*Verse* 9. The *"rod"* has a variety of meanings in Scripture. It might be of different materials, as it was employed for different purposes. At an early period, a wooden rod came into use as one of the insignia of royalty, under the name of sceptre. By degrees the sceptre grew in importance, and was regarded as characteristic of an empire, or of the reign of some particular king. A golden sceptre denoted wealth and pomp. The right, or straight sceptre, of which we read in Psalm 45:6, is expressive of the justice and uprightness, the truth and equity, which shall distinguish Messiah's reign, after his kingdom on earth has been established. But when it is said in Revelation 19:15, that he, "whose name is called the Word of God," will smite the nations, and "rule them with a rod of iron," if the rod signifies "his sceptre," then the "iron" of which it is made must be designed to express the severity of the judgments which the omnipotent "King of kings" will inflict on all who resist his authority. But to me it appears doubtful whether the "rod of iron" symbolises the royal sceptre of the Son of God at his second advent. It is mentioned in connection with "a sharp sword," which leads me to prefer the opinion that it also ought to be regarded as a weapon of war; at all events, the "rod of iron" mentioned in the Psalm we are endeavouring to explain. is evidently not the emblem of sovereign power, although represented as in the hands of a king, but an instrument of correction and punishment. In this sense the word "rod" is often used. . . . .When the correcting rod, which usually was a wand or cane, is represented as in this second Psalm, to be of "iron," it only indicates how weighty, how severe, how effectual the threatened chastisement will be—it will not merely bruise, but it will break. *"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."*  
The reasons why sinners rebel against God, stated, refuted, lamented, and repented of.  
1. The opposition to it: *"yet."*  
3. The power which maintains it: *"have I set."*  
5. The blessings flowing from it.

*Verse* 7. The divine decree concerning Christ, in connection with the decrees of election and providence. The Sonship of Jesus.  
Prayer indispensable.—*Jesus must ask.*

*Verse* 9. *The ruin of the wicked.* Certain, irresistible, terrible, complete, irretrievable, "like a potter's vessel."  
The gospel, a school for those who would learn how to rule and judge well. They may consider its principles, its exemplar, its spirit, etc.

*Verse* 11. *Mingled experience.* See the case of the women returning from the sepulchre. Matthew 28:8. This may be rendered a very comforting subject, if the Holy Spirit direct the mind of the preacher.  
1. *The command.*  
3. *The benediction* upon the obedient. "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 260.

*Last clause*.—Nature, object, and blessedness of saving faith.

WORK UPON THE SECOND PSALM

*Zion's King: the Second Psalm expounded in the Light of History and Prophecy.* By the Rev. DAVID PITCAIRN. 1851.

**÷Psalm 3** Psa 3:1-8

[Exposition](treasury\\ps003.htm)  
[Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings](treasury\\ps003.htm)  
[Hints to the Village Preacher](treasury\\ps003.htm)

TITLE. "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his Son." *You will remember the sad story of David's flight from his own palace, when in the dead of the night, he forded the brook Kedron, and went with a few faithful followers to hide himself for awhile from the fury of his rebellious son. Remember that David in this was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, too, fled; he, too, passed over the brook Kedron when his own people were in rebellion against him, and with a feeble band of followers he went to the garden of Gethsemane. He, too, drank of the brook by the way, and therefore doth he lift up the head. By very many expositors this is entitled* THE MORNING HYMN. *May we ever wake with holy confidence in our hearts, and a song upon our lips!*

DIVISION. *This Psalm may be divided into four parts of two verses each. Indeed, many of the Psalms cannot be well understood unless we attentively regard the parts into which they should be divided. They are not continuous descriptions of one scene, but a set of pictures of many kindred subjects. As in our modern sermons, we divide our discourse into different heads, so is it in these Psalms. There is always unity, but it is the unity of a bundle of arrows, and not of a single solitary shaft. Let us now look at the Psalm before us. In the first two verses you have David making a complaint to God concerning his enemies; he then declares his confidence in the Lord (3, 4), sings of his safety in sleep (5, 6), and strengthens himself for future conflict (7, 8).*

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. The poor broken-hearted father complains of the multitude of his enemies: and if you turn to 2 Samuel 15:12, you will find it written that "the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom," while the troops of David constantly diminished! *"Lord how are they increased that trouble me!"* Here is a note of exclamation to express the wonder of woe which amazed and perplexed the fugitive father. Alas! I see no limit to my misery, for my troubles are enlarged! There was enough at first to sink me very low; but lo! my enemies multiply. When Absalom, my darling, is in rebellion against me, it is enough to break my heart; but lo! Ahithophel hath forsaken me, my faithful counsellors have turned their backs on me; lo! my generals and soldiers have deserted my standard. "How are they increased that trouble me!" Troubles always come in flocks. Sorrow hath a numerous family.  
Let us here recall to our memory the innumerable host which beset our Divine Redeemer. The legions of our sins, the armies of fiends, the crowd of bodily pains, the host of spiritual sorrows, and all the allies of death and hell, set themselves in battle against the Son of Man. O how precious to know and believe that he has routed their hosts, and trodden them down in his anger! They who would have troubled us he has removed into captivity, and those who would have risen up against us he has laid low. The dragon lost his sting when he dashed it into the soul of Jesus.

Verse 2. David complains before his loving God of the worst weapon of his enemies' attacks, and the bitterest drop of his distresses. "Oh!" saith David, *"many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."* Some of his distrustful friends said this sorrowfully, but his enemies exultingly boasted of it, and longed to see their words proved by his total destruction. This was the unkindest cut of all, when they declared that his God had forsaken him. Yet David knew in his own conscience that he had given them some ground for this exclamation, for he had committed sin against God in the very light of day. Then they flung his crime with Bathsheba into his face, and they said, "Go up, thou bloody man; God hath forsaken thee and left thee." Shimei cursed him, and swore at him to his very face, for he was bold because of his backers, since multitudes of the men of Belial thought of David in like fashion. Doubtless, David felt this infernal suggestion to be staggering to his faith. If all the trials which come from heaven, all the temptations which ascend from hell, and all the crosses which arise from earth, could be mixed and pressed together, they would not make a trial so terrible as that which is contained in this verse. It is the most bitter of all afflictions to be led to fear that there is no help for us in God. And yet remember our most blessed Saviour had to endure this in the deepest degree when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He knew full well what is was to walk in darkness and to see no light. This was the curse of the curse. This was the wormwood mingled with the gall. To be deserted of his Father was worse than to be the despised of men. Surely we should love him who suffered this bitterest of temptations and trials for our sake. It will be a delightful and instructive exercise for the loving heart to mark the Lord in his agonies as here pourtrayed, for there is here, and in very many other Psalms, far more of David's Lord than of David himself.  
Here stands another *Selah*. Rest awhile, O tried believer, and change the strain to a softer air.

*Verse* 5. David's faith enabled him to *lie down;* anxiety would certainly have kept him on tiptoe, watching for an enemy. Yea, he was able to sleep, *to sleep* in the midst of trouble, surrounded by foes. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." There is a sleep of presumption; God deliver us from it! There is a sleep of holy confidence; God help us so to close our eyes! But David says he *awaked* also. Some sleep the sleep of death; but he, though exposed to many enemies, reclined his head on the bosom of his God, slept happily beneath the wing of Providence in sweet security, and then awoke in safety. *"For the Lord sustained me."* The sweet influence of the Pleiades of promise shone upon the sleeper, and he awoke conscious that the Lord had preserved him. An excellent divine has well remarked—"This quietude of a man's heart by faith in God, is a higher sort of work than the natural resolution of manly courage, for it is the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit upholding a man above nature, and therefore the Lord must have all the glory of it."

Verse 6. Buckling on his harness for the day's battle, our hero sings, *"I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about."* Observe that he does not attempt to under- estimate the number or wisdom of his enemies. He reckons them at tens of thousands, and he views them as cunning huntsmen chasing him with cruel skill. Yet he trembles not, but looking his foeman in the face he is ready for the battle. There may be no way of escape; they may hem me in as the deer are surrounded by a circle of hunters; they may surround me on every side, but in the name of God I will dash through them; or, if I remain in the midst of them, yet shall they not hurt me; I shall be free in my very prison.  
It is certainly unknown who invented or placed them where they are; but it is unquestionable that they have been so placed from time immemorial; they occur in the Septuagint, which contains also in a few instances titles to Psalms that are without any in the Hebrew; and they have been copied after the Septuagint by Jerome. So far as the present writer has been able to penetrate the obscurity that occasionally hangs over them, they are a direct and most valuable key to the general history or subject of the Psalms to which they are prefixed; and, excepting where they have been evidently misunderstood or misinterpreted, he has never met with a single instance in which the drift of the title and its respective Psalm do not exactly coincide. Many of them were, doubtless, composed by Ezra at the time of editing his own collection, at which period some critics suppose the whole to have been written; but the rest appear rather to be coeval, or nearly so, with the respective Psalms themselves, and to have been written about the period of their production. *John Mason Good, M.D., F.R.S.,* 1854.  
Upon this note an old writer remarks, "Let us learn from this, that in times of sore trouble men will not fetch a compass and use fine words in prayer, but will offer a prayer which is pruned of all luxuriance of wordy speeches."

*Whole Psalm.* Thus you may plainly see how God hath wrought in his church in old time, and therefore should not discourage yourselves for any sudden change; but with David, acknowledge your sins to God, declare unto him how many there be that vex you and rise up against you, naming you Huguenots, Lutherans, Heretics, Puritans, and the children of Belial, as they named David. Let the wicked idolaters brag that they will prevail against you and overcome you, and that God hath given you over, and will be no more your God. Let them put their trust in Absalom, with his large golden locks; and in the wisdom of Ahithophel, the wise counsellor; yet say you, with David, *"Thou, O Lord, art my defender, and the lifter up of my head."* Persuade yourselves, with David, that the Lord is your defender, who hath compassed you round about, and is, as it were, a *"shield"* that doth cover you on every side. It is he only that may and will compass you about with glory and honour. It is he that will thrust down those proud hypocrites from their seat, and exalt the lowly and meek. It is he which will *"smite"* your "enemies on *the cheek bone,"* and burst all their teeth in sunder. He will hang up Absalom by his own long hairs; and Ahithophel through desperation shall hang himself. The bands shall be broken, and you delivered; for this belongeth unto the Lord, to save his from their enemies, and to bless his people, that they may safely proceed in their pilgrimage to heaven without fear. *Thomas Tymme's "Silver Watch Bell",* 1634.

*Verse* 1. Absalom's faction, like a snowball, strangely gathered in its motion. David speaks of it as one amazed; and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally revolt from him, and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy young fellow 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 (Psalm 146:3), 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. *Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 2. When the believer questions the power of God, or his interest in it, his joy gusheth out as blood out of a broken vein. This verse is a sore stab indeed. *William Gurnall.*

*Verse* 2. A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with anything 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"* (Psalm 35:3), and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them. *Matthew Henry.*

*Verses* 2, 4, 8. *"Selah."* (Heb.) Much has been written on this word, and still its meaning does not appear to be wholly determined. It is rendered in the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase, (Hebrew), *lealmin, for ever*, or *to eternity*. In the Latin Vulgate, it is omitted, as if it were no part of the text. In the Septuagint it is rendered Diaqalma, supposed to refer to some variation or modulation of the voice in singing. Schleusner, *Lex.* The word occurs seventy-three times in the Psalms, and three times in the book of Habakkuk (3:3, 9, 13). It is never translated in our version, but in all these places the original word *Selah* is retained. It occurs only in poetry, and is supposed to have had some reference to the singing or cantillation of the poetry, and to be probably a musical term. In general, also, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance. Gesenius (Lex.) supposes that the most probable meaning of this musical term or note is *silence* or *pause*, and that its use was, in chanting the words of the Psalm, to direct the singer *to be silent, to pause a little*, while the instruments played an interlude or harmony. Perhaps this is all that can now be known of the meaning of the word, and this is enough to satisfy every reasonable enquiry. It is probable, if this was the use of the term, that it would commonly correspond with the sense of the passage, and be inserted where the sense made a pause suitable; and this will doubtless be found usually to be the fact. But anyone acquainted at all with the character of musical notation, will perceive at once that we are not to suppose that this would be invariably or necessarily the fact, for the musical pauses by no means always correspond with pauses in the sense. This word, therefore, can furnish very little assistance in determining the meaning of the passages where it is found. Ewald supposes, differing from this view, that it rather indicates that in the places where it occurs the voice is to be raised, and that it is synonymous with *up, higher, loud*, or *distinct*, from (Hebrew) *sal*, (Hebrew) *salal, to ascend*. Those who are disposed to enquire further respecting its meaning, and the uses of musical pauses in general, may be referred to Ugolin, "Thesau. Antiq. Sacr.," tom. xxii. *Albert Barnes,* 1868.

*Verses* 2, 4, 8. Selah, (Heb.) is found seventy-three times in the Psalms, generally at the end of a sentence or paragraph; but in Psalm 55:19 and 57:3, it stands in the middle of the verse. While most authors have agreed in considering this word as somehow relating to the *music,* their conjectures about its precise meaning have varied greatly. But at present these two opinions chiefly obtain. Some, including Herder, De Wette, Ewald (*Poet. Böcher*, i. 179), and Delitzsch, derive it from (Heb.), or (Heb.), *to raise*, and understand an *elevation* of the voice or music; others, after Gesenius, in *Thesaurus*, derive it from (Heb.), *to be still* or *silent*, and understand a pause in the singing. So Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, and Tholuck. Probably *selah* was used to direct the singer to be silent, or to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude (so Sept., diuqalma or symphony. In Psalm 9:16, it occurs in the expression *higgaion selah*, which Gesenius, with much probability, renders *instrumental music, pause; i.e.,* let the instruments strike up a symphony, and let the singer pause. By Tholuck and Hengstenberg, however, the two words are rendered *meditation, pause; i.e.,* let the singer meditate while the music stops. *Benjamin Davies, Ph.D.,L.L.D., article Psalms, in Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature.*

*Verse* 3. *"Lifter up of my head."* God will have the body partake with the soul—as in matters of grief, so in matters of joy; the lanthorn shines in the light of the candle within. *Richard Sibbs,* 1639.  
These were the circumstances under which Luther was placed, as he journeyed toward Worms. His friend Spalatin heard it said, by the enemies of the Reformation, that the safe conduct of a heretic ought not to be respected, and became alarmed for the reformer. "At the moment when the latter was approaching the city, a messenger appeared before him with this advice from the chaplain, 'Do not enter Worms!' And this from his best friend, the elector's confidant, from Spalatin himself! . . . . . But Luther, undismayed, turned his eyes upon the messenger, and replied, 'Go, and tell your master, that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles upon the housetops, still I would enter it.' The messenger returned to Worms, with this astounding answer: 'I was then undaunted,' said Luther, a few days before his death, 'I feared nothing.'"  
(1) His right to do so.  
(3) The fair results of such holy communications with the Lord.  
(1) In dangers we should pray.  
(3) We should record his answers of grace.  
(1) Describe sweet sleeping.  
(3) Show how both are to be enjoyed, "*for the Lord sustained me.*"

*Verse* 6. Faith surrounded by enemies and yet triumphant.

*Verse* 7.  
(2) Show that the Lord should be our constant resort, "O Lord," "O my God."  
(4) Urge believers to use the Lord's past victories as an argument with which to prevail with him.

*Verse* 7. (*last clause*). Our enemies vanquished foes, toothless lions.

*Verse* 8. (*first clause*). Salvation of God from first to last. (See the exposition.)

*Verse* 8. (*last clause*). They were blessed *in* Christ, *through* Christ, and shall be blessed *with* Christ. The blessing rests upon their persons, comforts, trials, labours, families, etc. It flows from grace, is enjoyed by faith, and is insured by oath, etc. *James Smith's Portions,* 1802-1862.

**÷Psalm 4** Psa 4:1-8

[Exposition](treasury\\ps004.htm)  
[Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings](treasury\\ps004.htm)  
[Hints to the Village Preacher](treasury\\ps004.htm)  
[Other Works](treasury\\ps004.htm)

TITLE. *This Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the third, and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled* THE MORNING PSALM, *this from its matter is equally deserving of the title of* THE EVENING HYMN. *May the choice words of the 8th verse be our sweet song of rest as we retire to our repose!*

"Thus with my thoughts composed to peace,  
I'll give mine eyes to sleep;  
Thy hand in safety keeps my days,  
And will my slumbers keep."

On Neginoth, *that is, on stringed instruments, or* hand *instruments, which were played on with the hand alone, as harps and cymbals. The joy of the Jewish church was so great that they needed music to set forth the delightful feelings of their souls. Our holy mirth is none the less overflowing because we prefer to express it in a more spiritual manner, as becometh a more spiritual dispensation. In allusion to these instruments to be played on with the hand, Nazianzen says, "Lord, I am an instrument for thee to touch." Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch, so shall we make melody. May we be full of faith and love, and we shall be living instruments of music.*  
DIVISION. *In the first verse David pleads with God for help. In the second he expostulates with his enemies, and continues to address them to the end of verse 5. Then from verse 6 to the close he delightfully contrasts his own satisfaction and safety with the disquietude of the ungodly in their best estate. The Psalm was most probably written upon the same occasion as the preceeding, and is another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy is it for us that David was tried, or probably we should never have heard these sweet sonnets of faith.*

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour. Here he reviews his Ebenezers and takes comfort from them. It is not to be imagined that he who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves, and he will never cease to help us until we cease to need. The manna shall fall every morning until we cross the Jordan.  
The name by which the Lord is here addressed, *"God of my righteousness,"* deserves notice, since it is not used in any other part of Scripture. It means, Thou art the author, the witness, the maintainer, the judge, and the rewarder of my righteousness; to thee I appeal from the calumnies and harsh judgments of men. Herein is wisdom, let us imitate it and always take our suit, not to the petty courts of human opinion, but into the superior court, the King's Bench of heaven.  
*"Have mercy upon me."* Though thou mayest justly permit my enemies to destroy me, on account of my many and great sins, yet I flee to thy mercy, and I beseech thee *hear my prayer*, and bring thy servant out of his troubles. The best of men need mercy as truly as the worst of men. All the deliverances of saints, as well as the pardons of sinners, are the free gifts of heavenly grace.

Verse 2. In this second division of the Psalm, we are led from the closet of prayer into the field of conflict. Remark the undaunted courage of the man of God. He allows that his enemies are great men (for such is the import of the Hebrew words translated—*sons of men*), but still he believes them to be foolish men, and therefore chides them, as though they were but children. He tells them that they *love vanity, and seek after leasing*, that is, lying, empty fancies, vain conceits, wicked fabrications. He asks them *how long* they mean to make his honour a jest, and his fame a mockery? A little of such mirth is too much, why need they continue to indulge in it? Had they not been long enough upon the watch for his halting? Had not repeated disappointments convinced them that the Lord's anointed was not to be overcome by all their calumnies? Did they mean to jest their souls into hell, and go on with their laughter until swift vengeance should turn their merriment into howling? In the contemplation of their perverse continuance in their vain and lying pursuits, the Psalmist solemnly pauses and inserts a *Selah*. Surely we too may stop awhile, and meditate upon the deep-seated folly of the wicked, their continuance in evil, and their sure destruction; and we may learn to admire that grace which has made us to differ, and taught us to *love* truth, and *seek* after righteousness.

Verse 3. *"But know."* Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz.:—the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from among men. Election is a doctrine which unrenewed men cannot endure, but nevertheless, it is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. He who chose us for himself will surely hear our prayer. The Lord's elect shall not be condemned, nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord's people in the same manner: let us tell our enemies to their faces, that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls. O beloved, when you are on your knees, the fact of your being *set apart* as God's own peculiar treasure, should give you courage and inspire you with fervency and faith. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" Since he chose to love us he cannot but choose to hear us.

Verse 4. *"Tremble and sin not."* How many reverse this counsel and sin but tremble not. O that men would take the advice of this verse and *commune with their own hearts.* Surely a want of thought must be one reason why men are so mad as to despite Christ and hate their own mercies. O that for once their passions would be quiet and let them *be still,* that so in solemn silence they might review the past, and meditate upon their inevitable doom. Surely a thinking man might have enough sense to discover the vanity of sin and the worthlessness of the world. Stay, rash sinner, stay, ere thou take the last leap. Go to *thy bed* and think upon thy ways. Ask counsel of thy pillow, and let the quietude of night instruct thee! Throw not away thy soul for nought! Let reason speak! Let the clamorous world be still awhile, and let thy poor soul plead with thee to bethink thyself before thou seal its fate, and ruin it for ever! *Selah.* O sinner! pause while I question thee awhile in the words of a sacred poet,—

"Sinner, is thy heart at rest?  
Is thy bosom void of fear?  
Art thou not by guilt oppress'd?  
Speaks not conscience in thine ear?

Can this world afford thee bliss?  
Can it chase away thy gloom?  
Flattering, false, and vain it is;  
Tremble at the worldling's doom!

Think, O sinner, on thy end,  
See the judgment-day appear,  
Thither must thy spirit wend,  
There thy righteous sentence hear.

Wretched, ruin'd, helpless soul,  
To a Saviour's blood apply;  
He alone can make thee whole,  
Fly to Jesus, sinner, fly!"

Verse 5. Provided that the rebels had obeyed the voice of the last verse, they would now be crying,—"What shall we do to be saved?" And in the present verse, they are pointed to the *sacrifice,* and exhorted to *trust in the Lord.* When the Jew offered sacrifice righteously, that is, in a spiritual manner, he thereby set forth the Redeemer, the great sin-atoning Lamb; there is, therefore, the full gospel in this exhortation of the Psalmist. O sinners, flee ye to the sacrifice of Calvary, and there put your whole confidence and *trust,* for he who died for men is the LORD JEHOVAH.

Verse 6. We have now entered upon the third division of the Psalm, in which the faith of the afflicted one finds utterance in sweet expressions of contentment and peace.  
We should not fail to remark that this verse is the *saying* of the righteous man, in opposition to the saying of the many. How quickly doth the tongue betray the character! "*Speak,* that I may see thee!" said Socrates to a fair boy. The metal of a bell is best known by its sound. Birds reveal their nature by their song. Owls cannot sing the carol of the lark, nor can the nightingale hoot like the owl. Let us, then, weigh and watch our words, lest our speech should prove us to be foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

Verse 8. Sweet Evening Hymn! I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will *lie down;* and then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down *in peace and sleep*, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was haunted by blood-thirsty foes. Note the word *"only"*, which means that God alone was his keeper, and that though alone, without man's help, he was even then in good keeping, for he was "alone with God." A quiet conscience is a good bedfellow. How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ.  
Dr. Hawker's reflection upon this Psalm is worthy to be prayed over and fed upon with sacred delight. We cannot help transcribing it.  
"Oh! thou gracious God and Father, hast thou in such a wonderful manner set apart one in our nature for thyself? Hast thou indeed chosen one out of the people? Hast thou beheld him in the purity of his nature,—as one in every point Godly? Hast thou given him as the covenant of the people? And hast thou declared thyself well pleased in him? Oh! then, well may my soul be well pleased in him also. Now do I know that my God and Father will hear me when I call upon him in Jesus' name, and when I look up to him for acceptance for Jesus' sake! Yes, my heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed; Jesus is my hope and righteousness; the Lord will hear me when I call. And henceforth will I both lay me down in peace and sleep securely in Jesus, accepted in the Beloved; for *this is the rest wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing."*

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

*Verse* 1. *"Hear me when I call,"* etc. Faith is a good orator and a noble disputer in a strait; it can reason from God's readiness to hear: *"Hear me when I call, O God."* And from the everlasting righteousness given to the man in the justification of his person: *"O God of my righteousness."* And from God's constant justice in defending the righteousness of his servant's cause: *"O God of my righteousness."* And from both present distresses and those that are by-past, wherein he hath been, and from by-gone mercies received: *"Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress."* And from God's grace, which is able to answer all objections from the man's unworthiness or ill-deserving: *"Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."* *David Dickson,* 1653.

*Verse* 1. *"Hear me."* The great Author of nature and of all things does nothing in vain. He instituted not this law, and, if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insufficient thing, but endows it with wonderful efficacy for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened. He has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may, with easy and pleasant labour, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth, and all the elements, obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all works, and, which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred Scriptures are the examples of Moses and Joshua, and that which James (5:17) particularly mentions of Elijah, whom he expressly calls *æotoäns, a man subject to like infirmities* with ourselves, that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under Antonius is well known and justly celebrated, which for the singular ardour and efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of *keraunoboloz, the thundering legion.* *Robert Leighton, D.D., Archbishop of Glasgow,* 1611 - 1684.

*Verse* 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."* Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift wing commits itself to heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong, wide-extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft, and point out, as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, who just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity entreating that he might be heard, now, as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace. *Robert Leighton, D.D.*

*Verse* 2. *"O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?"* etc. We might imagine every syllable of this precious Psalm used by our Master some evening, when about to leave the temple for the day, and retiring to his wonted rest at Bethany (v. 8), after another fruitless expostulation with the men of Israel. And we may read it still as the very utterance of his heart, longing over man, and delighting in God. But, further, not only is this the utterance of the Head, it is also the language of one of his members in full sympathy with him in holy feeling. This is a Psalm with which the righteous may make their dwellings resound, morning and evening, as they cast a sad look over a world that rejects God's grace. They may sing it while they cling more and more every day to Jehovah, as their all-sufficient heritage, now and in the age to come. They may sing it, too, in the happy confidence of faith and hope, when the evening of the world's day is coming, and may then fall asleep in the certainty of what shall greet their eyes on the resurrection morning—

"Sleeping embosomed in his grace,  
Till morning-shadows flee.

*Andrew A. Bonar*, 1859

*Verse* 2. *"Love vanity."* They that love sin, love *vanity*; they chase a bubble, they lean upon a reed, their hope is as a spider's web.  
Gilemex, king of Vandals, led in triumph by Belisarius, cried out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The fancy of Lucian, who placeth Charon on the top of a high hill, viewing all the affairs of men living, and looking on their greatest cities as little bird's nests, is very pleasant. Oh, the imperfection, the ingratitude, the levity, the inconstancy, the perfidiousness of those creatures we most servilely affect! Ah, did we but weigh man's pain with his payment, his crosses with his mercies, his miseries with his pleasures, we should then see that there is nothing got by the bargain, and conclude, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Chrysostom said once, "That if he were the fittest in the world to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for his pulpit, from whence he might have a prospect of all the world in his view, and were furnished with a voice of brass, a voice as loud as the trumpets of the archangel, that all the world might hear him, he would choose to preach upon no other text than that in the Psalms, O mortal men, *'How long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing?'"* *Thomas Brooks,* 1608-1680.

*Verse* 2. *"Love vanity."* Men's affections are according to their principles; and every one loves that most *without him* which is most suitable to somewhat *within him: liking* is founded in *likeness*, and has therefore that word put upon it. It is so in whatsoever we can imagine; whether in temporals or spirituals, as to the things of this life, or of a better. Men's love is according to some working and impression upon their own spirits. And so it is here in the point of vanity; those which are vain persons, they delight in vain things; as children, they love such matters as are most agreeable to their childish dispositions, and as do suit them in that particular. Out of the heart comes all kind of evil. *Thomas Horton,* 1675.

*Verse* 3. *"The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself."* When God chooseth a man, he chooseth him for himself; for himself to converse with, to communicate himself unto him as a friend, a companion, and his delight. Now, it is holiness that makes us fit to live with the holy God for ever, since without it we cannot see him (Hebrews 12:14), which is God's main aim, and more than our being his children; as one must be supposed a man, one of mankind, having a soul reasonable, ere we can suppose him capable of adoption, or to be another man's heir. As therefore it was the main first design in God's eye, before the consideration of our happiness, let it be so in ours. *Thomas Goodwin,* 1600-1679.

*Verse* 3. What rare persons the godly are: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Proverbs 12:26. As the flower of the sun, as the wine of Lebanon, as the sparkling upon Aaron's breastplate, such is the orient splendour of a person embellished with godliness. . . . . . . The godly are precious, therefore they are set apart for God, *"Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself."* We set apart things that are precious; the godly are set apart as God's peculiar treasure (Psalm 135:4); as his garden of delight (Canticles 4:12); as his royal diadem (Isaiah 43:3); the godly are the excellent of the earth (Psalm 16:3); comparable to fine gold (Lamentations 4:2); double refined (Zechariah 13:9). They are the glory of the creation. (Isaiah 46:13). Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystals: God calls them jewels (Malachi 3:17). *Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 3. *"The Lord will hear when I call unto him."* Let us remember that the experience of one of the saints concerning the verity of God's promises, and of the certainty of the written privileges of the Lord's people, is a sufficient proof of the right which all his children have to the same mercies, and a ground of hope that they also shall partake of them in their times of need. *David Dickson,* 1653.

*Verse* 4. *"Stand in awe and sin not."* Jehovah is a name of great power and efficacy, a name that hath in it five vowels, without which no language can be expressed; a name that hath in it also three syllables, to signify the Trinity of persons, the eternity of God, One in Three and Three in One; a name of such dread and reverence amongst the Jews, that they tremble to name it, and therefore they use the name *Adonai (Lord)* in all their devotions. And thus ought every one to *"stand in awe, and sin not,"* by taking the name of God in vain; but to sing praise, and honour, to remember, to declare, to exalt, to praise and bless it; for holy and reverend, only worthy and excellent is his name. *Rayment,* 1630.

*Verse* 4. *"Commune with your own heart."* The language is similar to that which we use when we say, "Consult your better judgment," or "Take counsel of your own good sense." *Albert Barnes, in loc.*

*Verse* 4. If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, accustom thyself to soliloquies, I mean to conference with thyself. He needs never be idle that hath so much business to do with his own soul. It was a famous answer which Antisthenes gave when he was asked what fruit he reaped by all his studies. By them, saith he, I have learned both to live and talk with myself. Soliloquies are the best disputes; every good man is best company for himself of all the creatures. Holy David enjoineth this to others, *"Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still." "Commune with your own hearts;"* when ye have none to speak with, talk to yourselves. Ask yourselves for what end ye were made, what lives ye have led, what times ye have lost, what love ye have abused, what wrath ye have deserved. Call yourselves to a reckoning, how ye have improved your talents, how true or false ye have been to your trust, what provision ye have laid in for an hour of death, what preparation ye have made for a great day of account. *"Upon your beds."* Secrecy is the best opportunity for this duty. The silent night is a good time for this speech. When we have no outward objects to disturb us, and to call our eyes, as the fools' eyes are always, to the ends of the earth; then our eyes, as the eyes of the wise, may be in our heads; and then our minds, like the windows in Solomon's temple, may be broad inwards. The most successful searches have been made in the night season; the soul is then wholly shut up in the earthly house of the body, and hath no visits from strangers to disquiet its thoughts. Physicians have judged dreams a probable sign whereby they might find out the distempers of the body. Surely, then, the bed is no bad place to examine and search into the state of the soul. *"And be still."* Self-communion will much help to curb your headstrong, ungodly passions. Serious consideration, like the casting up of earth amongst bees, will allay inordinate affections when they are full of fury, and make such a hideous noise. Though sensual appetites and unruly desires are, as the people of Ephesus, in an uproar, pleading for their former privilege, and expecting their wonted provisions, as in the days of their predominancy, if conscience use its authority, commanding them in God's name, whose officer it is, to keep the king's peace, and argue it with them, as the town-clerk of Ephesus, "We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this day's concourse;" all is frequently by this means hushed, and the tumult appeased without any further mischief. *George Swinnock,* 1627 - 1673.

*Verse* 4. *"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."* When we are most retired from the world, then we are most fit to have, and usually have, most communion with God. If a man would but abridge himself of sleep, and wake with holy thoughts, when deep sleep falleth upon sorrowful labouring men, he might be entertained with visions from God, though not such visions as Eliphaz and others of the saints have had, yet visions he might have. Every time God communicates himself to the soul, there is a vision of love, or mercy, or power, somewhat of God in his nature, or in his will, is showed unto us. David shows us divine work when we go to rest. The bed is not all for sleep: *"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."* Be still or quiet, and then commune with your hearts; and if you will commune with your hearts, God will come and commune with your hearts, too, his Spirit will give you a loving visit and visions of his love. *Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse* 4. *"Stand in awe."*

With sacred *awe* pronounce his name,  
Whom words nor thoughts can reach.

*John Needham,* 1768.

*Verse* 6. Where Christ reveals himself there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion, and without Christ there is emptiness in the greatest fullness. *Alexander Grosse, on enjoying Christ,* 1632.

*Verse* 6. *"Many,"* said David. *"ask who will shew us any good?"* meaning riches, and honour, and pleasure, which are not good. But when he came to godliness itself, he leaves out *"many,"* and prayeth in his own person, *"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;"* as if none would join with him. *Henry Smith.*

*Verse* 6. *"Who will shew us any good?"* This is not a fair translation. The word *any* is not in the text, nor anything equivalent to it; and not a few have quoted *it*, and preached upon the text, placing the principal emphasis upon this illegitimate. The place is sufficiently emphatic. There are *multitudes who say, Who will shew us good?* Man wants *good;* he hates *evil* as evil, because he has *pain, suffering*, and *death* through it; and he wishes to find that *supreme good* which will content his heart, and save him from evil. But men mistake this good. They look for a good that is to gratify their *passions;* they have no notion of any happiness that does not come to them through the *medium of their senses*. Therefore they reject *spiritual good*, and they reject the Supreme God, by whom alone all the powers of the soul of man can be gratified. *Adam Clarke.*

*Verse* 6. *"Lift thou up,"* etc. This was the blessing of the high priest and is the heritage of all the saints. It includes reconciliation, assurance, communion, benediction, in a word, the fulness of God. Oh, to be filled therewith! *C. H. S.*

*Verses* 6, 7. Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous; and lest they should be considered as the *chief good*, he frequently bestows them on the wicked. But they are more generally the portion of his enemies than his friends. Alas! what is it to receive and not be received? to have none other dews of blessing than such as shall be followed by showers of brimstone? We may compass ourselves with sparks of security, and afterwards be secrures in eternal misery. This world is a floating island, and so sure as we cast anchor *upon* it, we shall be carried away *by* it. God, and all that he has made, is not more than God without anything that he has made. He can never want treasure who has such a golden mine. *He* is enough without the creature, but the *creature* is not anything without him. It is, therefore, better to enjoy him without anything else, than to enjoy everything else without him. It is better to be a wooden vessel filled with wine, than a golden one filled with water. *William Secker's Nonsuch Professor,* 1660.

*Verse* 7. What madness and folly is it that the favourites of heaven should envy the men of the world, who at best do but feed upon the scraps that come from God's table! Temporals are the bones; spirituals are the marrow. Is it below a man to envy the dogs, because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals, when himself enjoys spirituals? *Thomas Brooks.*

*Verse* 7. *"Thou hast put gladness in my heart."* The comforts which God reserves for his mourners are filling comforts (Romans 15:13); "The God of hope fill you with joy" (John 16:24); "Ask that your joy may be full." When God pours in the joys of heaven they fill the heart, and make it run over (2 Corinthians 7:4); "I am exceeding joyful;" the Greek is, I overflow with joy, as a cup that is filled with wine till it runs over. Outward comforts can no more fill the heart than a triangle can fill a circle. Spiritual joys are satisfying (Psalm 63:5); "My heart shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;" *"Thou hast put gladness in my heart."* Worldly joys do put gladness into the face, but the spirit of God puts gladness into the heart; divine joys are heart joys (Zechariah 10:7; John 16:22); "Your heart shall rejoice" (Luke 1:47); "My spirit rejoiced in God." And to show how filling these comforts are, which are of a heavenly extraction, the psalmist says they create greater joy than when "*corn and wine increase*." Wine and oil may delight but not satisfy; they have their vacuity and indigence. We may say, as Zechariah 10:2, "They comfort in vain;" outward comforts do sooner cloy than cheer, and sooner weary that fill. Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart (Psalm 94:19), "Thy comforts delight my soul." There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten, and one that is painted on the wall. *Thomas Watson.*

*Verse* 8. It is said of the husbandman, that having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth day and night, and the seed springs and grows he knoweth not how. Mark 4:26,27. So a good man having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him according to his holy will. *Matthew Henry.*

*Verse* 8. When you have walked with God from morning until night, it remaineth that you *conclude* the day well, when you would give yourself to rest at night. Wherefore, first, look back and take a strict view of your whole carriage that *day past*. Reform what you find amiss; and rejoice, or be grieved, as you find you have done well or ill, as you have advanced or declined in grace that day. Secondly, since you cannot sleep in safety if God, who is your *keeper* (Psalm 121:4, 5), do not *wake and watch for you* (Psalm 127:1); and though you have *God* to watch when you sleep, you cannot be safe, if he that watcheth be your *enemy.* Wherefore it is very convenient that at night you renew and confirm your peace with God by faith and prayer, commending and committing yourself to God's tuition by prayer (Psalm 3:4, 5); Psalm 92:2), with thanksgiving before you go to bed. Then shall you *lie down in safety.* Psalm 4:8. All this being done, yet while you are *putting off* your apparel, when you are *lying down,* and when you are *in bed,* before you sleep, it is good that *you commune with* your *own heart.* Psalm 4:4. If possibly you can fall asleep with *some heavenly meditation,* then will your sleep be *more sweet* (Proverbs 3:21, 24, 25); and *more secure* (Proverbs 6:21, 22); your *dreams* fewer, or more *comfortable;* your head will be fuller of good thoughts (Proverbs 6:22), and your heart will be in a *better frame* when you *awake,* whether in the night or in the morning. *Condensed from Henry Scudder's Daily Walk,* 1633.

*Verse* 8. *"I will both,"* etc. We have now to retire for a moment from the strife of tongues and the open hostility of foes, into the stillness and privacy of the chamber of sleep. Here, also, we find the "I will" of trust. *"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."* God is here revealed to us as exercising *personal care in the still chamber*. And there is something here which should be inexpressibly sweet to the believer, for this shows the minuteness of God's care, the individuality of his love; how it condescends and stoops, and acts, not only in great, but also in little spheres; not only where glory might be procured from great results, but where nought is to be had save the gratitude and love of a poor feeble creature, whose life has been protected and preserved, in a period of helplessness and sleep. How blessed would it be if we made larger recognition of God in the still chamber; if we thought of him as being there in all hours of illness, of weariness, and pain; if we believed that his interest and care are as much concentrated upon the feeble believer there as upon his people when in the wider battle field of the strife of tongues. There is something inexpressibly touching in this "lying down" of the Psalmist. In thus lying down he voluntarily gave up any guardianship of himself; he resigned himself into the hands of another; he did so completely, for in the absence of all care he slept; there was here a perfect trust. Many a believer lies down, but it is not to sleep. Perhaps he feels safe enough so far as his body is concerned, but cares and anxieties invade the privacy of his chamber; they come to try his faith and trust; they threaten, they frighten, and alas! prove too strong for trust. Many a poor believer might say, "I will lay me down, but not to sleep." The author met with a touching instance of this, in the case of an aged minister whom he visited in severe illness. This worthy man's circumstances were narrow, and his family trials were great; he said, "The doctor wants me to sleep, but how can I sleep with care sitting on my pillow?" It is the experience of some of the Lord's people, that although equal to an emergency or a continued pressure, a re-action sets in afterwards; and when they come to be alone their spirits sink, and they do not realise that strength from God, or feel that confidence in him which they felt while the pressure was exerting its force. . . . . . There is a trial in stillness; and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battle field. O that we could trust God more and more with personal things! O that he were the God of our chamber, as well as of our temples and houses! O that we could bring him more and more into the minutiae of daily life! If we did thus, we should experience a measure of rest to which we are, perhaps, strangers now; we should have less dread of the sick chamber; we should have that unharassed mind which conduces most to repose, in body and soul; we should be able to say, "I will lie down and sleep, *and leave to-morrow with God!*" Ridley's brother offered to remain with him during the night preceeding his martyrdom, but the bishop declined, saying, that "he meant to go to bed, and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life." *Philip Bennett Power's 'I Wills' of the Psalms.*

*Verse* 8. Due observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquillity in your minds amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world. *"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety."* He resolves that sinful fears of events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious presages; he will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him; and he means not to lose the comfort of one night's rest, nor bring the evil of to-morrow upon the day; but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a resigned will. Now this tranquillity of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of providence as by anything whatsoever. *John Flavel,* 1627 - 1691.

*Verse* 8. Happy is the Christian, who having nightly with this verse, committed himself to his bed as to his grave, shall at last, with the same words, resign himself to his grave as to his bed, from which he expects in due time to arise, and sing a morning hymn with the children of the resurrection. *George Horne, D.D.,* 1776.

*Verse* 8. *"Sleep,"*

"How blessed was that *sleep*  
The sinless Saviour knew!  
In vain the storm-sinds blew,  
Till he awoke to others woes,  
And hushed the billows to repose.

How beautiful is *sleep*—  
The *sleep* that Christians know!  
Ye mourners! cease your woe,  
While soft upon his Saviour's breast,  
The righteous sinks to endless rest."

*Mrs. M'Cartree.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

*Verse* 1. Is full of matter for a sermon upon, *past mercies a plea for present help.* The first sentence shows that believers desire, expect, and believe in a God that heareth prayer. The title— *God of my righteousness,* may furnish a text (see exposition), and the last sentence may suggest a sermon upon, "The best of saints must still appeal to God's mercy and sovereign grace."

*Verse* 2. *Depravity of man* as evinced  
(2) by loving vanity in his heart, and  
(1) Their source, *"Thou;"*  
(3) Their position, *"in my heart;"*  
Another excellent theme suggests itself— "The superiority of the joys of grace to the joys of earth;" or, "Two sorts of prosperity—which is to be the more desired?"

*Verse* 8. The peace and safety of the good man. *Joseph Lathrop, D.D.,* 1805.

*Verse* 8. A bedchamber for believers, a vesper song to sing in it, and a guard to keep the door.

*Verse* 8. The Christian's good night.

*Verses* 2 *to* 8. The means which a believer should use to win the ungodly to Christ.  
(2) Instruction, verse 3.  
(4) Testimony to the blessedness of true religion as in verses 6, 7.  
￹FPRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "(5) Exemplification of that testimony by the peace of faith, verse 8.

WORKS UPON THE FOURTH PSALM

*Choice and Practical Expositions on four select Psalms:* namely, the Fourth Psalm, in eight Sermons, etc. By THOMAS HORTON, D.D. 1675

*Meditations, Critical and Practical, on Psalm IV.,* in Archbishop Leighton's Works.

**÷PSALM 5.**

**TITLE.** "To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth, a Psalm of David." The Hebrew word Nehiloth is taken from another word, signifying "to perforate;" "to bore through," whence it comes to mean a pipe or a flute; so that this song was probably intended to be sung with an accompaniment of wind instruments, such as the horn, the trumpet, flute, or cornet. However, it is proper to remark that we are not sure of the interpretation of these ancient titles, for the Septuagint translates it, "For him who shall obtain inheritance," and Aben Ezra thinks it denotes some old and well known melody to which this Psalm was to be played. The best scholars confess that great darkness hangs over the precise interpretation of the title; nor is this much to be regretted, for it furnishes an internal evidence of the great antiquity of the Book. Throughout the first, second, third, and forth Psalms, you will have noticed that the subject is a contrast between the position, the character, and the prospects of the righteous and of the wicked. In this Psalm you will note the same. The Psalmist carries out a contrast between himself made righteous by God's grace, and the wicked who opposed him. To the devout mind there is here presented a precious view of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.

**DIVISION.** The Psalm should be divided into two parts, from the first to the seventh verse, and then from the eighth to the twelfth. In the first part of the Psalm David most vehemently beseeches the Lord to hearken to his prayer, and in the second part he retraces the same ground.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** There are two sorts of prayersthose expressed in words, and the unuttered longings which abide as silent meditations. Words are not the essence but the garments of prayer. Moses at the Red Sea cried to God, though he said nothing. Yet the use of language may prevent distraction of mind, may assist the powers of the soul, and may excite devotion. David, we observe, uses both modes of prayer, and craves for the one a hearing, and for the other a *consideration.* What an expressive word!

Consider my meditation. If I have asked that which is right, give it to me; if I have omitted to ask that which I most needed, fill up the vacancy in my prayer. "Consider my meditation." Let thy holy soul *consider* it as presented through my all-glorious Mediator: then regard thou it in thy wisdom, weigh it in the scales, judge thou of my sincerity, and of the true state of my necessities, and answer me in due time for thy mercy's sake! There may be prevailing intercession where there are no words; and alas! there may be words where there is no true supplication. Let us cultivate the *spirit* of prayer which is even better than the *habit* of prayer. There may be seeming prayer where there is little devotion. We should begin to pray before we kneel down, and we should not cease when we rise up.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 1.** Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid, and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God, so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, nor indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the wind as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair; his prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer; and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly, and constantly, and eagerly urges his petitions, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope. *Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Ver. 1-2. Observe the order and force of the words, my cry, the voice of my prayer; and also, give ear, consider, hearken. These expressions all evince the urgency and energy of David's feelings and petitions. First we have, *"give ear;"* that is, hear me. But it is of little service for the words to be heard, unless the *"cry,"* or the roaring, or the meditation, be *considered.* As if he had said, in a common way of expression, I speak with deep anxiety and concern, but with a failing utterance; and I cannot express myself, nor make myself understood as I wish. Do thou, therefore, understand from my feelings more than I am able to express in words. And, therefore, I add my *"cry;"* that what I cannot express in words for thee to hear, I may by my *"cry"* signify to thine understanding. And when thou hast understood me, then, O Lord, Hearken unto the voice of my prayer, and despise not what thou hast thus heard and understood. We are not, however, to understand that hearing, understanding, and hearkening, are all different acts in God, in the same way as they are in us; but that our feelings towards God are to be thus varied and increased; that is, that we are first to desire to be heard, and then, that our prayers which are heard may be understood; and then, that being understood, they may be hearkened unto, that is, not disregarded. *Martin Luther.*

**Ver. 1.** Meditation fits the soul for supplication; meditation fills the soul with good liquor, and then prayer broaches it, and sets it a-running. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue, "Lord, make me to know mine end." #Ps 39:3-4. Nay, to assure us that meditation was the mother which bred and brought forth prayer, he calls the child by its parent's name, Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Meditation is like the charging of a piece, and prayer the discharging of it. "Isaac went into the field to meditate." #Ge 24:63. The Septuagint, the Geneva translation, and Tremellius, in his marginal notes on it, read it to "pray;" and the Hebrew word (ggh) used there signifieth both to *pray* and *meditate;* whereby we may learn that they are very near akin; like twins, they be in the same womb, in the same word. Meditation is the best beginning of prayer, and prayer is the best conclusion of meditation. When the Christian, like Daniel, hath first opened the windows of his soul by contemplation, then he may kneel down to prayer. *George Swinnock.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

Ver. 1-2. Prayer in its threefold form. Words, meditation, cry. Showing how utterance is of no avail without heart, but that fervent longings and silent desires are accepted, even when unexpressed.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** The voice of my cry. In another Psalm we find the expression, "The voice of my weeping." Weeping has a voice a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God; and *crying* hath a voice a soul-moving eloquence; coming from *our* heart it reaches *God's* heart. Ah! my brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a *cry:* but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he hears a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magic influence which his heart cannot resist.

My King, and my God. Observe carefully these little pronouns, *"my* King, and *my* God." They are the pith and marrow of the plea. Here is a grand argument why God should answer prayer because he is our *King* and *our* God. We are not aliens to him: he is the King of our country. Kings are expected to hear the appeals of their own people. We are not strangers to him; we are his worshippers, and he is our God: ours by covenant, by promise, by oath, by blood.

For unto thee will I pray. Here David expresses his declaration that he will seek to God, and to God alone. God is to be the only object of worship: the only resource of our soul in times of need. Leave broken cisterns to the godless, and let the godly drink from the Divine fountain alone. "Unto thee *will* I pray." He makes a resolution, that as long as he lived he would pray. He would never cease to supplicate, even though the answer should not come.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 1-2. Observe the order and force of the words, my cry, the voice of my prayer; and also, give ear, consider, hearken. These expressions all evidence the urgency and energy of David's feelings and petitions. First we have, *"give ear;"* that is, hear me. But it is of little service for the words to be heard, unless the *"cry,"* or the roaring, or the meditation, be *considered.* As if he had said, in a common way of expression, I speak with deep anxiety and concern, but with a failing utterance; and I cannot express myself, nor make myself understood as I wish. Do thou, therefore, understand from my feelings more than I am able to express in words. And, therefore, I add my *"cry;"* that what I cannot express in words for thee to hear, I may by my "cry" signify to thine understanding. And when thou hast understood me, then, O Lord, Hearken unto the voice of my prayer, and despise not what thou hast thus heard and understood. We are not, however, to understand that hearing, understanding, and hearkening, are all different acts in God, in the same way as they are in us; but that our feelings towards God are to be thus varied and increased; that is, that we are first to desire to be heard, and then, that our prayers which are heard may be understood; and then, that being understood, they may be hearkened unto, that is, not disregarded. *Martin Luther.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

Ver. 1-2. Prayer in its threefold form. Words, meditation, cry. Showing how utterance is of no avail without heart, but that fervent longings and silent desires are accepted, even when unexpressed.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 3.** Observe, this is not so much a prayer as a resolution,

My voice shalt thou hear; I will not be dumb, I *will* not be silent, I will not withhold my speech, I will cry to thee for the fire that dwells within compels me to pray." We can sooner die than live without prayer. None of God's children are possessed with a dumb devil.

In the morning. This is the fittest time for intercourse with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. Let us give to God the mornings of our days and the morning of our lives. Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star.

If we merely read our English version, and want an explanation of these two sentences, we find it in the figure of an archer,

I will direct my prayer unto thee, I will put my prayer upon the bow, I will direct it towards heaven, and then when I have shot up my arrow, *I will look up* to see where it has gone. But the Hebrew has a still fuller meaning than this "I will *direct* my prayer." It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: "I will arrange my prayer before thee;" I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. I will *arrange* my prayer; or, as old Master Trapp has it, "I will marshall up my prayers," I will put them in order, call up all my powers, and bid them stand in their proper places, that I may pray with all my might, and pray acceptably.

And will look up, or, as the Hebrew might better be translated, "`I will look out,' I will look out for the answer; after I have prayed, I will expect that the blessing shall come." It is a word that is used in another place where we read of those who watched for the morning. So will I watch for thine answer, O my Lord! I will spread out my prayer like the victim on the altar, and I will look up, and expect to receive the answer by fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Two questions are suggested by the last part of this verse. Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility. We are like men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the end of prayer? We should be careful to keep the stream of meditation always running; for this is the water to drive the mill of prayer. It is idle to pull up the flood-gates of a dry brook, and then hope to see the wheel revolve. Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is hawking with a blind falcon. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, but he works by means. God made man, but he used the dust of the earth as a material: the Holy Ghost is the author of prayer, but he employs the thoughts of a fervent soul as the gold with which to fashion the vessel. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well-kindled fire.

But, furthermore, do we not forget to watch the result of our supplications? We are like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. We sow the seed, and are too idle to seek a harvest. How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3.** My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave To do the like; our bodies but forerun The spirit's duty: true hearts spread and heave Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun; Give him thy first thoughts, then, so shalt thou keep Him company all day, and in him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours 'Twixt heaven and us; the manna was not good After sun-rising, for day sullies flowers. Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut, And heaven's gate opens when the world's is shut.

Walk with thy fellow creatures; note the hush And whisperings amongst them. Not a spring Or leaf but hath his morning hymn; each bush And oak doth know I AM canst thou not sing? O leave thy cares and follies! Go this way, And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

*Henry Vaughn,* 1621 - 1695.

**Ver. 3.** My voice shalt thou hear in the morning. "In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee," said Heman. That is the fittest time for devotion, you being then fresh in your spirits, and freest from distractions. Which opportunity for holy duties may fitly be called *the wings of the morning. Edward Reyner,* 1658.

**Ver. 3.** In the morning. "In the days of our fathers," says Bishop Burnet, "when a person came early to the door of his neighbour, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom `My master is at prayer,' as it now is to say, `My master is not up.'"

**Ver. 3.** In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up, or, *I will marshall my prayer,* I will bring up petition after petition, pleading after pleading, even till I become like Jacob, a prince with God, till I have won the field and got the day. Thus the word is applied by a metaphor both to disputations with men and supplications to God. Further, we may take the meaning plainly without any strain of rhetoric, *Set thy words in order before me.* Method is good in everything, either an express or covert method. Sometimes it is the best of art to cover it: in speaking there is a special use of method, for though, as one said very well (speaking of those who are more curious about method than serious about matter), *"Method never converted any man;"* yet method and the ordering of words is very useful. Our speeches should not be heaps of words, but words bound up; not a throng of words, but words set in array, or, as it were, in rank and file. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 3.** I will direct my prayer unto thee and will look up. In the words you may observe two things: first, David's posture in prayer; secondly, his practice after prayer. First, his posture in prayer, I will direct my prayer unto thee. Secondly, his practice after prayer, And I will look up. The prophet in these words, makes use of two military words. First, he would not only pray, but marshall up his prayers, he would put them in battle array; so much the Hebrew word ($r[) imports. Secondly, when he had done this, then he would be as a spy upon his watch-tower, to see whether he prevailed, whether he got the day or no; and so much the Hebrew word (hpc) imports. When David had set his prayers, his petitions, in rank and file, in good array, then he was resolved he would look abroad, he would look about him to see at what door God would send in an answer to prayer. He is either a fool or a madman, he is either very weak or very wicked, that prays and prays but never looks after his prayers; that shoots many an arrow toward heaven, but never minds where his arrows alight. *Thomas Brooks.*

**Ver. 3.** David would direct his prayer to God and look up; not down to the world, down to corruption, but up to God what he would speak. #Ps 85:8. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," Let the resolution of the prophet be thine, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." #Mic 7:7. *William Greenhill,* 1650.

**Ver. 3.** I will direct my prayer to thee, and will look up, that is, I will trade, I will send out my spiritual commodities, and expect a gainful return; I will make my prayers, and not give them for lost, but look up for an answer. God will bring man home by a way contrary to that by which he wandered from him. Man fell from God by distrust, by having God in suspicion; God will bring him back by trust, by having good thoughts of him. Oh, how richly laden might the vessel which thou sendest out come home, wouldst thou but long and look for its return! *George Swinnock.*

**Ver. 3.** Faith hath a supporting act after prayer; it supports the soul to expect a gracious answer: I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up, or I will look; for what, but for a return? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying; but faith fills the soul with expectation. As a merchant, when he casts up his estate, he counts what he hath sent beyond sea, as well as what he hath in hand; so doth faith reckon upon what he hath sent to heaven in prayer and not received, as well as those mercies which he hath received, and are in hand at present. Now this expectation which faith raiseth in the soul after prayer, appears in the power that it hath to quiet and compose the soul in the interim between the sending forth, as I may say, the ship of prayer, and its return home with its rich lading it goes for, and it is more or less, according as faith's strength is. Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria.* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. ... For want of looking up many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? And if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence. What is this but to take his name in vain? O Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise ... Mordecai, no doubt, had put up many prayers for Esther, and therefore he waits at the king's gate, looking what answer God would in his providence give therunto. Do thou likewise. *William Gurnall.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 3.** The excellence of morning devotion.

**Ver. 3.** *(last two clauses)*

1. Prayer directed.  
2. Answers expected.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 4.** And now the Psalmist having thus expressed his resolution to pray, you hear him putting up his prayer. He is pleading against his cruel and wicked enemies. He uses a most mighty argument. He begs of God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God himself.

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. "When I pray against my tempters," says David, "I pray against the very things which thou thyself abhorrest." *Thou* hatest evil: Lord, I beseech thee, deliver *me* from it!

Let us learn here the solemn truth of the hatred which a righteous God must bear toward sin. *He has no pleasure in wickedness,* however wittily, grandly, and proudly it may array itself. Its glitter has no charm for him. Men may bow before successful villainy, and forget the wickedness of the battle in the gaudiness of the triumph, but the Lord of Holiness is not such-an-one as we are.

Neither shall evil dwell with thee. He will not afford it the meanest shelter. Neither on earth nor in heaven shall evil share the mansion of God. Oh, how foolish are we if we attempt to entertain two guests so hostile to one another as Christ Jesus and the devil! Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlour of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 4.** Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness. As a man that cutteth with a dull knife is the cause of cutting, but not of the ill-cutting and hacking of the knifethe knife is the cause of that; or if a man strike upon an instrument that is out of tune, he is the cause of the sound, but not of the jarring sound that is the fault of the untuned strings; or, as a man riding upon a lame horse, stirs himthe man is the cause of the motion, but the horse himself of the halting motion: thus God is the author of every action, but not of the evil of that actionthat is from man. He that makes instruments and tools of iron or other metal, he maketh not the rust and canker which corrupteth them, that is from another cause; nor doth that heavenly workman, God Almighty, bring in sin and iniquity; nor can he be justly blamed if his creatures do soil and besmear themselves with the foulness of sin, for he made them good. *Spencer's Things New and Old.*

Ver. 4-6. Here the Lord's alienation from the wicked is set forth gradually, and seems to rise by six steps. First, he hath no pleasure in them; secondly, they shall not dwell with him; thirdly, he casteth them forth, they shall not stand in his sight; fourthly, his heart turns from them, thou hatest all the workers of iniquity; fifthly, his hand is turned upon them, thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; sixthly, his spirit rises against them, and is alienated from them, the Lord will abhor the bloody man. This estrangement is indeed a *strange* (yet a certain) *punishment* to the workers of iniquity. These words, *"the workers of iniquity," may be considered two ways. First, as intending (not all degrees of sinners, or sinners of every degree, but) the highest degree of sinners, great, and gross sinners, resolved and wilful sinners. Such as sin industriously, and, as it were, artificially, with skill and care to get themselves a name, as if they had an ambition to be accounted workmen* that need not to be ashamed of doing that whereof all ought to be ashamed; these, in strictness of Scripture sense, are *"workers of iniquity."* Hence note, notorious sinners make sin their business, or trade. Though every sin be a work of iniquity, yet only some sinners are *"workers of iniquity;" and they who are called so, make their calling to sin. We read of some who love and make a lie.* #Re 22:15. A lie may be told by those who neither love nor make it; but there are lie-makers, and they, sure enough, are lovers of a lie. Such craftsmen in sinning are also described in #Ps 58:2 "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth." The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there; *the heart is a shop within, an underground shop;* there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions. *Joseph Caryl.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 4.** God's hatred of sin an example to his people.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 5.** The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Sinners are fools written large. A little sin is a great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin. Such sinful fools as these must be banished from the court of heaven. Earthly kings were wont to have fools in their trains, but the only wise God will have no fools in his palace above.

Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing. O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God!

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 4-6. Here the Lord's alienation from the wicked is set forth gradually, and seems to rise by six steps. First, he hath no pleasure in them; secondly, they shall not dwell with him; thirdly, he casteth them forth, they shall not stand in his sight; fourthly, his heart turns from them, thou hatest all the workers of iniquity; fifthly, his hand is turned upon them, thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; sixthly, his spirit rises against them, and is alienated from them, the Lord will abhor the bloody man. This estrangement is indeed a *strange* (yet a certain) *punishment* to the workers of iniquity. These words, *"the workers of iniquity,"* may be considered two ways. First, as intending (not all degrees of sinners, or sinners of every degree, but) the highest degree of sinners, great, and gross sinners, resolved and wilful sinners. Such as sin industriously, and, as it were, artificially, with skill and care to get themselves a name, as if they had an ambition to be accounted *workmen* that need not to be ashamed of doing that whereof all ought to be ashamed; these, in strictness of Scripture sense, are *"workers of iniquity."* Hence note, *notorious sinners make sin their business, or trade.* Though every sin be *a work of iniquity,* yet only some sinners are *"workers of iniquity;"* and they who are called so, make their calling to sin. We read of some *who love and make a lie.* #Re 22:15. A lie may be told by those who neither love nor make it; but there are lie-makers, and they, sure enough, are lovers of a lie. Such craftsmen in sinning are also described in #Ps 58:2 "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth." The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there; *the heart is a shop within, an underground shop;* there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 5.** What an astonishing thing is sin, which maketh the God of love and Father of mercies an enemy to his creatures, and which could only be purged by the blood of the Son of God! Though all must believe this who believe the Bible, yet the exceeding sinfulness of sin is but weakly apprehended by those who have the deepest sense of it, and will never be fully known in this world. *Thomas Adam's Private Thoughts,* 1701-1784.

**Ver. 5.** *(last clause)*. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. For what God thinks of sin, see #De 7:22; Pr 6:16; Re 2:6,15; where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceeds all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it; nay, not only the work, but *worker* also of iniquity becomes the object of his hatred. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 5.** *(last clause)*. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. If God's hatred be against the workers of iniquity, how great is it against iniquity itself! If a man hates a poisonous creature, he hates poison much more. The strength of God's hatred is against sin, and so should we hate sin, and hate it with strength; it is an abomination unto God, let it be so unto us. #Pr 6:16-19, "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." *William Greenhill.*

**Ver. 5.** *(last clause)*. Those whom the Lord hates must perish. But he hates impenitent sinners, Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Now, who are so properly workers of iniquity as those who are so eager at it that they will not leave this work, though they be in danger to perish for it? Christ puts it out of doubt. The workers of iniquity must perish. #Lu 13:27. Those whom the Lord will tear in his wrath must perish with a witness; but those whom he hates, he tears, &c. #Job 16:8. What more due to such impenitent sinners than hatred? What more proper than wrath, since they treasure up wrath? #Ro 2:5. Will he entertain those in the bosom of love whom his soul hates? No; destruction is their portion. #Pr 21:15. If all the curses of the law, all the threatenings of the gospel, all judgments in earth or in hell, will be the ruin of him, he must perish. If the Lord's arm be strong enough to wound him dead, he must die. #Ps 68:21 ... Avoid all that Christ hates. If you love, approve, entertain that which is hateful to Christ, how can he love you? What is that which Christ hates? The psalmist (#Ps 45:7) tells us, making it one of Christ's attributes, to hate wickedness ... As Christ hates iniquity, so the *"workers of iniquity."* You must not love them, so as to be intimate with them, delight in the company of evil doers, openly profane, scorners of godliness, obstructors of the power of it. #2Co 6:14-18. If you love so near relations to wicked men, Christ will have no relation to you. If you would have communion with Christ in sweet acts of love, you must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor those that act them. *David Clarkson, B.D.,* 1621-1686.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 5.** *"The foolish."* Show why sinners are justly called fools.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 6.** Observe, that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers, for thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing. All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction.

The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. Bloody men shall be made drunk with their own blood, and they who began by deceiving others shall end with being deceived themselves. Our old proverb saith, "Bloody and deceitful men dig their own graves." The voice of the people is in this instance the voice of God. How forcible is the word *abhor!* Does it not show us how powerful and deep-seated is the hatred of the Lord against the workers of iniquity?

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 4-6. Here the Lord's alienation from the wicked is set forth gradually, and seems to rise by six steps. First, he hath no pleasure in them; secondly, they shall not dwell with him; thirdly, he casteth them forth, they shall not stand in his sight; fourthly, his heart turns from them, thou hatest all the workers of iniquity; fifthly, his hand is turned upon them, thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; sixthly, his spirit rises against them, and is alienated from them, the Lord will abhor the bloody man. This estrangement is indeed a *strange* (yet a certain) *punishment* to the workers of iniquity. These words, *"the workers of iniquity,"* may be considered two ways. First, as intending (not all degrees of sinners, or sinners of every degree, but) the highest degree of sinners, great, and gross sinners, resolved and wilful sinners. Such as sin industriously, and, as it were, artificially, with skill and care to get themselves a name, as if they had an ambition to be accounted *workmen* that need not to be ashamed of doing that whereof all ought to be ashamed; these, in strictness of Scripture sense, are "workers of iniquity." Hence note, *notorious sinners make sin their business, or trade.* Though every sin be *a work of iniquity,* yet only some sinners are *"workers of iniquity;"* and they who are called so, make their calling to sin. We read of some *who love and make a lie.* #Re 22:15. A lie may be told by those who neither love nor make it; but there are lie-makers, and they, sure enough, are lovers of a lie. Such craftsmen in sinning are also described in #Ps 58:2"Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth." The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there; *the heart is a shop within, an underground shop;* there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 6.** Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing, whether in jest or earnest. Those that lie in jest will (without repentance) go to hell in earnest. *John Trapp*.

**Ver. 6.** Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing, etc. In the same field where Absalom raised battle against his father, stood the oak that was his gibbet. The mule whereon he rode was his hangman, for the mule carried him to the tree, and the hair wherein he gloried served for a rope to hang. Little know the wicked how everything which now they have shall be a snare to trap them when God begins to punish them. *William Cowper,* 1612.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 7.** With this verse the first part of the Psalm ends. The Psalmist has bent his knee in prayer; he has described before God, as an argument for his deliverance, the character and the fate of the wicked; and now he contrasts this with the condition of the righteous.

But as for me, I will come into thy house. I will not stand at a distance, I will come into thy sanctuary, just as a child comes into his father's house. But I will not come there by my own merits; no, I have a multitude of sins, and therefore I will come in the multitude of thy mercy. I will approach thee with confidence because of thy immeasurable grace. God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy.

And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,towards the temple of thy holiness. The temple was not built on earth at that time; it was but a tabernacle; but David was wont to turn his eyes spiritually to that temple of God's holiness where between the wings of the Cherubim Jehovah dwells in light ineffable. Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem, but we open our hearts toward heaven.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 7.** In thy fear will I worship. As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so a holy fear of miscarrying in so solemn a duty would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand. As the sculpture is on the seal, so will the print on the wax be; if the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 7.** David saith, In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. The temple did shadow forth the body of our Lord Christ, the Mediator, in whom only our prayers and service are accepted with the Father which Solomon respected in looking towards the temple. *Thomas Manton, D.D.,* 1620-1677.

**Ver. 7.** But as for me, etc. A blessed verse this! a blessed saying! The words and the sense itself, carry with them a powerful contrast. For there are two things with which this life is exercised, HOPE and FEAR, which are, as it were, those two springs of #Jud 1:15, the one from above, the other from beneath. *Fear* comes from beholding the threats and fearful judgments of God; as being a God in whose sight no one is clean, every one is a sinner, every one is damnable. But *hope* comes from beholding the promises, and the all-sweet mercies of God; as it is written (#Ps 25:6), "Remember, O Lord, thy loving kindnesses, and thy tender mercies which have been ever of old." Between these two, as between the upper and nether millstone, we must always be ground and kept, that we may never turn either to the right hand or to the left. For this turning is the state peculiar to hypocrites, who are exercised with the two contrary things, security and presumption. *Martin Luther.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 7.** Multitude of thy mercy. Dwell upon the varied grace and goodness of God.

**Ver. 7.** The devout resolution

**Ver. 7.**

1. Observe the *singularity* of the resolution.

2. Mark the *object* of the resolution. It regards the service of God in the sanctuary. "I will come into thine *house*...in thy fear will I *worship* towards thy holy *temple."*

3. The *manner* in which he would accomplish the resolution. (1) Impressed with a sense of the divine goodness: "I will come into thy house in *the multitude of thy mercy."* (2) Filled with holy veneration: "And *in thy fear* will I worship."

*William Jay,* 1842.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 8.** Now we come to the second part, in which the Psalmist repeats his arguments, and goes over the same ground again.

Lead me, O Lord, as a little child is led by its father, as a blind man is guided by his friend. It is safe and pleasant walking when God leads the way.

In thy righteousness, not in *my* righteousness, for that is imperfect, but in *thine,* for thou art righteousness itself.

Make thy way, not *my* way, straight before my face. Brethren, when we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. Errors about duty may lead us into a sea of sins, before we know where we are.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

None

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 8.** God's guidance needed always and especially when enemies are watching us.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 9.** This description of depraved man has been copied by the Apostle Paul, and, together with some other quotations, he has placed it in the second chapter of Romans, as being an accurate description of the whole human race, not of David's enemies only, but of all men by nature. Note that remarkable figure,

Their throat is an open *sepulchre,* a sepulchre full of loathsomeness, of miasma, of pestilence and death. But, worse than that, it is an *open* sepulchre, with all its evil gases issuing forth, to spread death and destruction all around. So, with the throat of the wicked, it would be a great mercy if it could always be closed. If we could seal in continual silence the mouth of the wicked it would be like a sepulchre shut up, and would not produce much mischief. But, "their throat is an *open* sepulchre," consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales, and comes forth. How dangerous is an open sepulchre; men in their journeys might easily stumble therein, and find themselves among the dead. Ah! take heed of the wicked man, for there is nothing that he will not say to ruin you; he will long to destroy your character, and bury you in the hideous sepulchre of his own wicked throat. One sweet thought here, however. At the resurrection there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but characters. This should be a great comfort to a man who has been abused and slandered. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." The world may think you vile, and bury your character; but if you have been upright, in the day when the graves shall give up their dead, this open sepulchre of the sinner's throat shall be compelled to give up your heavenly character, and you shall come forth and be honoured in the sight of men.

They flatter with their tongue. Or, as we might read it, "They have an oily tongue, a smooth tongue." A smooth tongue is a great evil; many have been bewitched by it. There be many human ant-eaters that with their long tongues covered with oily words entice and entrap the unwary and make their gain thereby. When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth in its blood.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 9.** If the whole soul be infected with such a desperate disease, what a great and difficult work it is to regenerate, to restore men again to spiritual life and vigour, when every part of them is seized by such a mortal distemper! How great a cure doth the Spirit of God effect in restoring a soul by sanctifying it! To heal but the lungs or the liver, if corrupted, is counted a great cure, though performed but upon one part of thee; but all thy inward parts are very rottenness. 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. How great a cure is it then to heal thee! Such as is only in the skill and power of God to do. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Ver. 9.** Their throat is an open sepulchre. This figure graphically portrays the filthy conversation of the wicked. Nothing can be more abominable to the senses than an open sepulchre, when a dead body beginning to putrefy steams forth its tainted exhalations. What proceeds out of their mouth is infected and putrid; and, as the exhalation from a sepulchre proves the corruption within, so it is with the corrupt conversation of sinners. *Robert Haldane's "Expositions of the Epistle to the Romans,"* 1835.

**Ver. 9.** Their throat is an open sepulchre. This doth admonish us, (1) that the speeches of natural unregenerate men are unsavory, rotten, and hurtful to others; for, as a sepulchre doth send out noisome savours and filthy smells, so evil men do utter rotten and filthy words. (2) As a sepulchre doth consume and devour bodies cast into it, so wicked men do with their cruel words destroy others; they are like a gulf to destroy others. (3) As a sepulchre, having devoured many corpses, is still ready to consume more, being never satisfied, so wicked men, having overthrown many with their words, do proceed in their outrage, seeking whom they may devour. *Thomas Wilson,* 1653.

**Ver. 9.** Their inward part, etc. Their hearts are storehouses for the devil. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 10.** Against thee: not against *me.* If they were *my* enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive *thine.* We are to forgive *our* enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive. These expressions have often been noticed by men of over refinement as being harsh, and grating on the ear. "Oh!" say they, "they are vindictive and revengeful." Let us remember that they might be translated as prophecies, not as wishes; but we do not care to avail ourselves of this method of escape. We have never heard of a reader of the Bible who, after perusing these passages, was made revengeful by reading them, and it is but fair to test the nature of a writing by its effects. When we hear a judge condemning a murderer, however severe his sentence, we do not feel that we should be justified in condemning others for any private injury done to us. The Psalmist here speaks as a judge, *ex officio;* he speaks as God's mouth, and in condemning the wicked he gives us no excuse whatever for uttering anything in the way of malediction upon those who have caused us personal offence. The most shameful way of cursing another is by pretending to bless him. We were all somewhat amused by noticing the toothless malice of that wretched old priest of Rome, when he foolishly cursed the Emperor of France with his blessing. He was blessing him in form and cursing him in reality. Now, in direct contrast we put this healthy commination of David, which is intended to be a blessing by warning the sinner of the impending curse. O impenitent man, be it known unto thee that all thy godly friends will give their solemn assent to the awful sentence of the Lord, which he shall pronounce upon thee in the day of doom! Our verdict shall applaud the condemning curse which the Judge of all the earth shall thunder against the godless.

In the following verse we once more find the contrast which has marked the preceeding Psalms.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver.10. All those portions where we find apparently prayers that breathe revenge, are never to be thought of as anything else than the *breathed assent of righteous souls* to the justice of their God, who taketh vengeance on sin. When taken as the words of Christ himself, they are no other than an echo of the Intercessor's acquiescence at last in the sentence on the barren fig-tree. It is as if he cried aloud, "Hew it down now, I will intercede no longer, the doom is righteous, *destroy them, O God; cast them out in* (or, for) the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee." And in the same moment he may be supposed to invite his saints to sympathise in his decision; just as in #Re 18:20, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets." In like manner when one of Christ's members, in entire sympathy with his Head, views the barren fig-tree from the same point of observation, and sees the glory of God concerned in inflicting the blow, he too can cry, "Let the axe smite!" Had Abraham stood beside the angel who destroyed Sodom, and seen how Jehovah's name required the ruin of these impenitent rebels, he would have cried out, "Let the shower descend; let the fire and brimstone come down!" not in any spirit of revenge; not from want of tender love to souls, but from intense earnestness of concern for the glory of his God. We consider this explanation to be the real key that opens all the difficult passages in this book, where curses seem to be called for on the head of the ungodly. They are no more than a carrying out of #De 27:15-26, "Let all the people say, Amen," and an entering into the Lord's holy abhorrence of sin, and delight in acts of justice expressed in the "Amen, hallelujah," of #Re 19:3. *Andrew A. Bonar,* 1859.

Ver.10. *(Or imprecatory passages generally.)* Lord, when in my daily service I read David's Psalms, give me to alter the accent of my soul according to their several subjects. In such Psalms wherein he confesseth his sins, or requesteth thy pardon, or praiseth for former, or prayeth for future favours, in all these give me to raise my soul to as high a pitch as may be. But when I come to such Psalms wherein he curseth his enemies, O there let me bring my soul down to a lower note. For those words were made only to fit David's mouth. I have the like breath, but not the same spirit to pronounce them. Nor let me flatter myself, that it is lawful for me, with David, to curse thine enemies, lest my deceitful heart entitle mine enemies to be thine, and so what was religion in David, prove malice in me, whilst I act revenge under the pretense of piety. *Thomas Fuller, D.D.,* 1608-1661.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

Ver.10. Viewed as a threatening. The sentence, Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, is specially fitted to be the groundwork of a very solemn discourse.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 11.** Joy is the privilege of the believer. When sinners are destroyed our rejoicing shall be full. They laugh first and weep ever after; we weep now, but shall rejoice eternally. When they howl we shall shout, and as they must groan for ever, so shall we *ever shout* for joy. This holy bliss of ours has a firm foundation, for, O Lord, we are joyful in thee. The eternal God is the well-spring of our bliss. We love God, and therefore we delight in him. Our heart is at ease in our God. We fare sumptuously every day because we feed on him. We have music in the house, music in the heart, and music in heaven, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

None.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 11.**

1. The character of the righteous: *faith and love.*

2. The privileges of the righteous. (1) *Joy* great, pure, satisfying, triumphant, *(shout)* constant *(ever)*. (2) *Defence* by power, providence, angels, grace, etc.

**Ver. 11.** Joy in the Lord both a duty and a privilege.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 12.** Jehovah has ordained his people the heirs of blessedness, and nothing shall rob them of their inheritance. With all the fulness of his power he will bless them, and all his attributes shall unite to satiate them with divine contentment. Nor is this merely for the present, but the blessing reaches into the long and unknown future.

Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous. This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness.

As for the defence which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David,

With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. According to Ainsworth there is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defence. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 12.** When the strong man armed comes against us, when he darts his fiery darts, what can hurt us, if God compass us about with *his lovingkindness as with a shield?* He can disarm the tempter and restrain his malice, and tread him under our feet. If God be not with us, if he do not give us sufficient grace, so subtle, so powerful, so politic an enemy, will be too hard for us. How surely are we foiled, and get the worse, when we pretend to grapple with him in our own strength! How many falls, and how many bruises by those falls have we got, by relying too much on our own skill? How often have we had the help of God when we have humbly asked it! And how sure are we to get the victory, *if Christ pray for us that we do not fail!* #Lu 22:31. Where can we go for shelter but unto God our Maker! When this lion of the forest does begin to roar, how will he terrify and vex us, till he that permits him for awhile to trouble us, be pleased to chain him up again! *Timothy Rogers,* 1691.

**Ver. 12.** As with a shield. Luther, when making his way into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, who had summoned him to answer for his heretical opinions at Augsburg, was asked by one of the Cardinal's minions, where he should find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him? "Under the shield of heaven!" was the reply. The silenced minion turned round, and went his way.

**Ver. 12.** With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. The shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are: helmet, fitted for the head; plate, designed for the breast; and so others, they have their several parts, which they are fastened to; but the shield is a piece that is intended for the defence of the whole body. It was used therefore to be made very large; for its broadness, called a gate or door, because so long and large, as in a manner to cover the whole body. And if the shield were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet being a movable piece of armour, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man: every part of the Christian by it is preserved ... The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but it is a defence to the soldier's armour also; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith, it is armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces. *William Gurnall.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 12.** *(first clause). The divine blessing upon the righteous.* It is ancient, effectual, constant, extensive, irreversible, surpassing, eternal, infinite.

**Ver. 12.** *(second clause).* A sense of divine favour a defence to the soul.

**÷PSALM 6**

**TITLE.** This Psalm is commonly known as the first of the PENITENTIAL PSALMS, (The other six are Ps 32:1-11 38:1-22 51:1-19 102:1-7 Ps 130:1-8 143:1-12) and certainly its language well becomes the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once the sorrow, (Ps 6:3,6,7), the humiliation (Ps 6:2,4), and the hatred of sin (Ps 6:8), which are the unfailing marks of the contrite spirit when it turns to God. O Holy Spirit, beget in us the true repentance which needeth not to be repented of. The title of this Psalm is "To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith (1Ch 15:21), A Psalm of David," that is, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, upon the eighth, probably the octave. Some think it refers to the bass or tenor key, which would certainly be well adapted to this mournful ode. But we are not able to understand these old musical terms, and even the term "Selah," still remains untranslated. This, however, should be no difficulty in our way. We probably lose but very little by our ignorance, and it may serve to confirm our faith. It is a proof of the high antiquity of these Psalms that they contain words, the meaning of which is lost even to the best scholars of the Hebrew language. Surely these are but incidental (accidental I might almost say, if I did not believe them to be designed by God), proofs of their being, what they profess to be, the ancient writings of King David of olden times.

**DIVISION.** You will observe that the Psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist's plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse. Then you have, from the eighth to the end, quite a different theme. The Psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key, and betakes himself to sublimer strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God hath heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** Having read through the first division, in order to see it as a whole, we will now look at it verse by verse.

O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger. The Psalmist is very conscious that he deserves to be rebuked, and he feels, moreover, that the rebuke in some form or other must come upon him, if not for condemnation, yet for conviction and sanctification. "Corn is cleaned with wind, and the soul with chastenings." It were folly to pray against the golden hand which enriches us by its blows. He does not ask that the rebuke may be totally withheld, for he might thus lose a blessing in disguise; but, "Lord, rebuke me not *in thine anger.*" If thou remindest me of my sin, it is good; but, oh, remind me not of it as one incensed against me, lest thy servant's heart should sink in despair. Thus saith Jeremiah, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." I know that I must be chastened, and though I shrink from the rod yet do I feel that it will be for my benefit; but, oh, my God, chasten me not in thy hot displeasure, lest the rod become a sword, and lest in smiting, thou shouldest also kill. So may we pray that the chastisements of our gracious God, if they may not be entirely removed, may at least be sweetened by the consciousness that they are "not in anger, but in his dear covenant love."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Whole Psalm. David was a man that was often exercised with sickness and troubles from enemies, and in all the instances almost that we meet with in the Psalms of these his afflictions, we may observe the outward occasions of trouble brought him under the suspicion of God's wrath and his own iniquity; so that he was seldom sick, or persecuted, but this called on the disquiet of conscience, and brought his sin to remembrance; as in this Psalm, which was made on the occasion of his sickness, as appears from verse eight, wherein he expresseth the vexation of his soul under the apprehension of God's anger; all his other griefs running into this channel, as little brooks, losing themselves in a great river, change their name and nature. He that at first was only concerned for his sickness, is now wholly concerned with sorrow and smart under the fear and hazard of his soul's condition; the like we may see in Ps 38:1-22, and many places more. *Richard Gilpin,* 1677.

**Ver. 1.** Rebuke me not. God hath two means by which he reduceth his children to obedience; his word, by which he rebukes them; and his rod, by which he chastiseth them. The word precedes, admonishing them by his servants whom he hath sent in all ages to call sinners to repentance: of the which David himself saith, "Let the righteous rebuke me;" and as a father doth first rebuke his disordered child, so doth the Lord speak to them. But when men neglect the warnings of his word, then God as a good Father, takes up the rod and beats them. Our Saviour wakened the three disciples in the garden three times, but seeing that served not, he told them that Judas and his band were coming to awaken them whom his own voice could not waken. *A. Symson,* 1638.

**Ver. 1.** Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger, etc. He does not altogether refuse punishment, for that would be unreasonable; and to be without it, he judged would be more hurtful than beneficial to him; but what he is afraid of is the wrath of God, which threatens sinners with ruin and perdition. To anger and indignation David tacitly opposes fatherly and gentle chastisement, and this last he was willing to bear. *John Calvin,* 1509 - 1564.

**Ver. 1.** O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.

The anger of the Lord? Oh, dreadful thought! How can a creature frail as man endure The tempest of his wrath? Ah, whither flee To 'scape the punishment he well deserves? Flee to the cross! the great atonement there Will shield the sinner, if he supplicate For pardon with repentence true and deep, And faith that questions not. Then will the frown Of anger pass from off the face of God, Like a black tempest cloud that hides the sun.

*Anon.*

**Ver. 1.** Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, etc.; that is, do not lay upon me that thou hast threatened in thy law; where anger is not put for the decree nor the execution, but for the denouncing. So (Mt 3:11, and so Ho 11:9), "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger," that is, I will not execute my wrath as I have declared it. Again, it is said, he executes punishment on the wicked; he declares it not only, but executeth it, so anger is put for the execution of anger. *Richard Stock,* 1641.

**Ver. 1.** Neither chasten me in thine hot displeasure.

O keep up life and peace within, If I must feel thy chastening rod! Yet kill not me, but kill my sin, And let me know thou art my God. O give my soul some sweet foretaste Of that which I shall shortly see! Let faith and love cry to the last, "Come, Lord, I trust myself with thee!"

*Richard Baxter,* 1615-1691.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 1.** *A sermon for afflicted souls.*

1. God's twofold dealings. (1) Rebuke, by a telling sermon, a judgment on another, a slight trial in our own person, or a solemn monition in our conscience by the Spirit. (2) Chastening. This follows the other when the first is disregarded. Pain, losses, bereavements, melancholy, and other trials.

2. The evils in them to be most dreaded, anger and hot displeasure.

3. The means to avert these ills. Humiliation, confession, amendment, faith in the Lord, etc.

**Ver. 1.** The believer's greatest dread, the anger of God. What this fact reveals in the heart? Why is it so? What removes the fear?

WORKS UPON THE SIXTH PSALM

*A Godly and Fruitful Exposition on the Sixt Psalme, the First of the Penitentials; in a sacred Septenarie; or, a Godly and Fruitful Exposition on the Seven Psalmes of Repentance.* by MR. ARCHIBALD SYMSON, late Pastor of the Church at Dalkeeth in Scotland. 1638.

*Sermones on the Penetential Psalms,* in "The Works of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's," 1621 - 1631. Edited by HENRY ALFORD, M.A. In six volumes. 1839.

*On Verse 6. The Sick Man's Couch; a Sermon preached before the most noble Prince Henry, as Greenwich, Mar. 12., ann. 1604.* by THOMAS PLAYFERE. &c., in Playfere's Sermons.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak. Though I deserve destruction, yet let thy mercy pity my frailty. This is the right way to plead with God if we would prevail. Urge not your goodness or your greatness, but plead your sin and your littleness. Cry, *"I am weak,"* therefore, O Lord, give me strength and crush me not. Send not forth the fury of thy tempest against so weak a vessel. Temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Be tender and pitiful to a poor withering flower, and break it not from its stem. Surely this is the plea that a sick man would urge to move the pity of his fellow if he were striving with him, "Deal gently with me, `for I am weak.'" A sense of sin had so spoiled the Psalmist's pride, so taken away his vaunted strength, that he found himself weak to obey the law, weak through the sorrow that was in him, too weak, perhaps, to lay hold on the promise. *"I am weak."* The original may be read, "I am one who droops," or withered like a blighted plant. Ah! beloved, we know what this means, for we, too, have seen our glory stained, and our beauty like a faded flower.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 2.** Have mercy upon me, O Lord. To fly and escape the anger of God, David sees no means in heaven or in earth, and therefore retires himself to God, even to him that wounded him that he might heal him. He flies not with Adam to the bush, nor with Saul to the witch, nor with Jonah to Tarshish; but he appeals from an angry and just God to a merciful God, and from himself to himself. The woman who was condemned by King Philip, appealed from Philip being drunken to Philip being sober. But David appeals from one virtue, justice, to another, mercy. There may be appellation from the tribunal of man to the justice-seat of God; but when thou art indicted before God's justice-seat, whither or to whom wilt thou go but to himself and his mercy-seat, which is the highest and last place of appellation? "I have none in heaven but thee, nor in earth besides thee." ... David, under the name of mercy, includeth all things, according to that of Jacob to his brother Esau, "I have gotten mercy, and therefore I have gotten all things." Desirest thou any thing at God's hands? Cry for *mercy,* out of which fountain all good things will spring to thee. *Archibald Symson.*

**Ver. 2.** For I am weak. Behold what rhetoric he useth to move God to cure him, *"I am weak,"* an argument taken from his weakness, which indeed were a weak argument to move any man to show his favour, but is a strong argument to prevail with God. If a diseased person would come to a physician, and only lament the heaviness of his sickness, he would say, God help thee; or an oppressed person come to a lawyer, and show him the estate of his action and ask his advice, that is a golden question; or to a merchant to crave raiment, he will either have present money or a surety; or a courtier favour, you must have your reward ready in your hand. But coming before God, the most forcible argument that you can use is your necessity, poverty, tears, misery, unworthiness, and confessing them to him, it shall be an open door to furnish you with all things that he hath. . . . The tears of our misery are forcible arrows to pierce the heart of our heavenly Father, to deliver us and pity our hard case. The beggars lay open their sores to the view of the world, that the more they may move men to pity them. So let us deplore our miseries to God, that he, with the pitiful Samaritan, at the sight of our wounds, may help us in due time. *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 2. Heal me, etc. David comes not to take physic upon wantonness, but because the disease is violent, because the accidents are vehement; so vehement, so violent, as that it hath pierced *ad ossa,* and *ad animam, "My bones are vexed, and my soul is sore troubled,* therefore *"heal me;"* which is the reason upon which he grounds this second petition, *"Heal me, because my bones are vexed,"* etc. *John Donne.*

Ver. 2. My bones are vexed. The Lord can make the strongest and most insensible part of a man's body sensible of his wrath when he pleaseth to touch him, for here David's bones are vexed. *David Dickson.*

**Ver. 2.** The term bones frequently occurs in the Psalms, and if we examine we shall find it used in three different senses. (1.) It is sometimes applied literally to our blessed Lord's human body, to the body which hung upon the cross, as, "They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones," (2.) It has sometimes also a further reference to his mystical body the church. And then it denotes all the members of Christ's body that stand firm in the faith, that cannot be moved by persecutions, or temptations, however severe, as, "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?" (3.) In some passages the term bones is applied to the soul, and not to the body, to the inner man of the individual Christian. Then it implies the strength and fortitude of the soul, the determined courage which faith in God gives to the righteous. This is the sense in which it is used in the second verse of Psalm 6, O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. *Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom; quoted by F. H. Dunwell, B.A., in "Parochial Lectures on the Psalms,"* 1855.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2.** *The argumentum ad misericordiam.*

Ver. 2. *First sentence — Divine healing.*

(1) What precedes it, my bones are vexed.  
(2) How it is wrought.  
(3) What succeeds it.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 3.** O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. Here he prays for *healing,* not merely the mitigation of the ills he endured, but their entire removal, and the curing of the wounds which had arisen therefrom. His bones were *"shaken,"* as the Hebrew has it. His terror had become so great that his very bones shook; not only did his flesh quiver, but the bones, the solid pillars of the house of manhood, were made to tremble. "My bones are shaken." Ah, when the soul has a sense of sin, it is enough to make the bones shake; it is enough to make a man's hair stand up on end to see the flames of hell beneath him, an angry God above him, and danger and doubt surrounding him. Well might he say, "My bones are shaken." Lest, however, we should imagine that it was merely bodily sickness — although bodily sickness might be the outward sign — the Psalmist goes on to say,

My soul is also sore vexed. Soul-trouble is the very soul of trouble. It matters not that the bones shake if the soul be firm, but when the soul itself is also sore vexed this is agony indeed.

But thou, O Lord, how long? This sentence ends abruptly, for words failed, and grief drowned the little comfort which dawned upon him. The Psalmist had still, however, some hope; but that hope was only in his God. He therefore cries, "O Lord, how long?" The coming of Christ into the soul in his priestly robes of grace is the grand hope of the penitent soul; and, indeed, in some form or other, Christ's appearance is, and ever has been, the hope of the saints.

Calvin's favourite exclamation was, "Domine usquequo"—O Lord, how long? Nor could his sharpest pains, during a life of anguish, force from him any other word. Surely this is the cry of the saints under the altar, "O Lord, how long?" And this should be the cry of the saints waiting for the millennial glories, "Why are his chariots so long in coming; Lord, how long?" Those of us who have passed through conviction of sin knew what it was to count our minutes hours, and our hours years, while mercy delayed its coming. We watched for the dawn of grace, as they that watch for the morning. Earnestly did our anxious spirits ask, "O Lord, how long?"

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3.** My soul. Yokefellows in sin are yokefellows in pain; the soul is punished for informing, the body for performing, and as both the informer and performer, the cause and the instrument, so shall the stirrer up of sin and the executor of it be punished. *John Donne.*

**Ver. 3.** O Lord, how long? Out of this we have three things to observe; first, that there is an appointed time which God hath measured for the crosses of all his children, before which time they shall not be delivered, and for which they must patiently attend, not thinking to prescribe time to God for their delivery, or limit the Holy One of Israel. The Israelites remained in Egypt till the complete number of four hundred and thirty years were accomplished. Joseph was three years and more in the prison till the appointed time of his delivery came. The Jews remained seventy years in Babylon. So that as the physician appointeth certain times to the patient, both wherein he must fast, and be dieted, and wherein he must take recreation, so God knoweth the convenient times both of our humiliation and exaltation. Next, see the impatiency of our nature in our miseries, our flesh still rebelling against the Spirit, which oftentimes forgetteth itself so far, that it will enter into reasoning with God, and quarrelling with him, as we may read in Job, Jonas, etc., and here also of David. Thirdly, albeit the Lord delay his coming to relieve his saints, yet hath he great cause if we could ponder it; for when we were in the heat of our sins, many times he cried by the mouth of his prophets and servants, "O fools, how long will you continue in your folly?" And we would not hear; and therefore when we are in the heat of our pains, thinking long, yea, every day a year till we be delivered, no wonder is it if God will not hear; let us consider with ourselves the just dealing of God with us; that as he cried and we would not hear, so now we cry, and he will not hear. *A. Symson.*

**Ver. 3.** O Lord, how long? As the saints in heaven have their *usque quo,* how long, Lord, holy and true, before thou begin to execute judgment? So, the saints on earth have their *usque quo.* How long, Lord, before thou take off the execution of this judgment upon us? For, our deprecatory prayers are not mandatory, they are not directory, they appoint not God his ways, nor times; but as our postulatory prayers are, they also are submitted to the will of God, and have all in them that ingredient, that herb of grace, which Christ put into his own prayer, that *veruntamen, yet not my will, but thy will be fulfilled;* and they have that ingredient which Christ put into our prayer, *fiat voluntas, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven; in heaven there is no resisting of his will; yet in heaven there is a soliciting, a hastening, an accelerating of the judgment, and the glory of the resurrection; so though we resist not his corrections here upon the earth, we may humbly present to God the sense which we have of his displeasure, for this sense and apprehension of his corrections is one of the principal reasons why he sends them; he corrects us therefore that we might be sensible of his corrections; that when we, being humbled under his hand, have said with his prophet, "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him"* (Mic 7:9), he may be pleased to say to his correcting angel, as he did to his destroying angel, *This is enough,* and so burn his rod now, as he put up his sword then. *John Donne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 3.** The impatience of sorrow; its sins, mischief, and cure.

**Ver. 3.** A fruitful topic may be found in considering the question, How long will God continue afflictions to the righteous?

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 4.** Return, O Lord; deliver my soul. As God's absence was the main cause of his misery, so his return would be enough to deliver him from his trouble.

Oh save me for thy mercies' sake. He knows where to look, and what arm to lay hold upon. He does not lay hold on God's left hand of justice, but on his right hand of mercy. He knew his iniquity too well to think of merit, or appeal to anything but the grace of God.

For thy mercies' sake. What a plea that is! How prevalent it is with God! If we turn to justice, what plea can we urge? but if we turn to mercy we may still cry, notwithstanding the greatness of our guilt, "Save me for thy mercies' sake."

Observe how frequently David here pleads the name of Jehovah, which is always intended where the word LORD is given in capitals. Five times in four verses we here meet with it. Is not this a proof that the glorious name is full of consolation to the tempted saint? Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Self-existence, are all in the name Jehovah, and all are full of comfort.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 4.** Return, O Lord, deliver my soul, etc. In this his besieging of God, he brings up his works from afar off, closer; he begins in this Psalm, at a deprecatory prayer; he asks nothing, but that God would do nothing, that he would forbear him—*rebuke me not, correct me not.* Now, it costs the king less to give a pardon than to give a pension, and less to give a reprieve than to give a pardon, and less to connive, not to call in question, than either reprieve, pardon, or pension; to forbear is not much. But then as the mathematician said, that he could make an engine, a screw, that should move the whole frame of the world, if he could have a place assigned him to fix that engine, that screw upon, that so it might work upon the world; so prayer, when one petition hath taken hold upon God, works upon God, moves God, prevails with God, entirely for all. David then having got this ground, this footing in God, he brings his works closer; he comes from the deprecatory to a postulatory prayer; not only that God would do nothing against him, but that he would do something for him. God hath suffered man to see *Arcana imperii,* the secrets of his state, how he governs — he governs by precedent; by precedents of his predecessors, he cannot, he hath none; by precedents of other gods he cannot, there are none; and yet he proceeds by precedents, by his own precedents, he does as he did before, *habenti dat,* to him that hath received he gives more, and is willing to be wrought and prevailed upon, and pressed with his own example. And, as though his doing good were but to learn how to do good better, still he writes after his own copy, and *nulla dies sine linea.* He writes something to us, that is, he doth something for us every day. And then, that which is not often seen in other masters, his copies are better than the originals; his latter mercies larger than his former; and in this postulatory prayer, larger than the deprecatory, enters our text, Return, O Lord; deliver my soul: O save me, etc. *John Donne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. Return, O Lord. A prayer suggested by a sense of the Lord's absence, excited by grace, attended with heart searching and repentance, backed by pressing danger, guaranteed as to its answer, and containing a request for all mercies.

Ver. 4. The praying of the deserted saint.

1. *His state:* his soul is evidently in bondage and danger;  
2. *His hope:*it is the Lord's return.  
3. *His plea:* mercy only.

EXPOSITION

Ver 5. And now David was in great fear of death—death temporal, and perhaps death eternal. Read the passage as you will, the following verse is full of power.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks? Churchyards are silent places; the vaults of the sepulchre echo not with songs. Damp earth covers dumb mouths. "O Lord!" saith he, "if thou wilt spare me I will praise thee. If I die, then must my mortal praise at least be suspended; and if I perish in hell, then thou wilt never have any thanksgiving from me. Songs of gratitude cannot rise from the flaming pit of hell. True, thou wilt doubtless be glorified, even in my eternal condemnation, but then O Lord, I cannot glorify thee voluntarily; and among the sons of men, there will be one heart the less to bless thee." Ah! poor trembling sinners, may the Lord help you to use this forcible argument! It is for God's glory that a sinner should be saved. When we seek pardon, we are not asking God to do that which will stain his banner, or put a blot on his escutcheon. He delighteth in mercy. It is his peculiar, darling attribute. Mercy honours God. Do not we ourselves say, "Mercy blesseth him that gives, and him that takes?" And surely, in some diviner sense, this is true of God, who, when he gives mercy, glorifies himself.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 5.** For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who will give thee thanks? Lord, be thou pacified and reconciled to me ... for shouldest thou now proceed to take away my life, as it were a most direful condition for me to die before I have propitiated thee, so I may well demand what increase of glory or honour will it bring unto thee? Will it not be infinitely more glorious for thee to spare me, till by true contrition I may regain thy favour?—and then I may live to praise and magnify thy mercy and thy grace: thy mercy in pardoning so great a sinner, and then confess thee by vital actions of all holy obedience for the future, and so demonstrate the power of thy grace which hath wrought this change in me; neither of which will be done by destroying me, but only thy just judgments manifested in thy vengeance on sinners, *Henry Hammond, D.D.,* 1659.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 5.** The final suspension of earthly service considered in various practical aspects.

**Ver. 5.** The duty of praising God while we live.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 6. The Psalmist gives a fearful description of his long agony:

I am weary with my groaning. He has groaned till his throat was hoarse; he had cried for mercy till prayer became a labour. God's people may groan, but they may not grumble. Yea, they must groan, being burdened, or they will never shout in the day of deliverance. The next sentence, we think, is not accurately translated. It should be,

I shall make my bed to swim every night (when nature needs rest, and when I am most alone with my God). That is to say, my grief is fearful even now, but if God do not soon save me, it will not stay of itself, but will increase, until my tears will be so many, that my bed itself shall swim. A description rather of what he feared would be, than of what had actually taken place. May not our forebodings of future woe become arguments which faith may urge when seeking present mercy?

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 6. I fainted in my mourning. It may seem a marvellous change in David, being a man of such magnitude of mind, to be thus dejected and cast down. Prevailed he not against Goliath, against the lion and the bear, through fortitude and magnanimity? But now he is sobbing, sighing, and weeping as a child! The answer is easy; the diverse persons with whom he hath to do occasioneth the same. When men and beasts are his opposites, then he is more than a conqueror; but when he hath to do with God against whom he sinned, then he is less than nothing.

**Ver. 6.** I caused my bed to swim. ... Showers be better than dews, yet it is sufficient if God at least hath bedewed our hearts, and hath given us some sign of a penitent heart. If we have not rivers of waters to pour forth with David, neither fountains flowing with Mary Magdalen, nor as Jeremy, desire to have a fountain in our head to weep day and night, nor with Peter weep bitterly; yet if we lament that we cannot lament, and mourn that we cannot mourn: yea, if we have the smallest sobs of sorrow and tears of compunction, if they be true and not counterfeit, they will make us acceptable to God; for as the woman with the bloody issue that touched the hem of Christ's garment, was no less welcome to Christ than Thomas, who put his fingers in the print of the nails; so, God looketh not at the quantity, but the sincerity of our repentance.

**Ver. 6.** My bed. The place of his sin is the place of his repentance, and so it should be; yea, when we behold the place where we have offended, we should be pricked in the heart, and there again crave him pardon. As Adam sinned in the garden, and Christ sweat bloody tears in the garden. "Examine your hearts upon your beds, and convert unto the Lord;" and whereas ye have stretched forth yourselves upon your bed to devise evil things, repent there and make them sanctuaries to God. Sanctify by your tears every place which ye have polluted by sin. And let us seek Christ Jesus on our own bed, with the spouse in the Canticles, who saith, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth." *Archibald Symson.*

Ver. 6. I water my couch with tears. Not only I *wash,* but also I *water.* The faithful sheep of the great Shepherd go up from the *washing* place, every one bringeth forth twins, and none barren among them. So 4:2. For so Jacob's sheep, having conceived at the watering troughs, brought forth strong and party-coloured lambs. David likewise, who before had erred and strayed like a lost sheep making here his bed a washing-place, by so much the less is barren in obedience, by how much the more he is fruitful in repentance. In Solomon's temple stood the caldrons of brass, to wash the flesh of those beasts which were to be sacrificed on the altar. Solomon's father maketh a water of his tears, a caldron of his bed, an altar of his heart, a sacrifice, not of the flesh of unreasonable beasts, but of his own body, a living sacrifice, which is his reasonable serving of God. Now the Hebrew word here used signifies properly, to cause to swim, which is more than simply to wash. And thus the Geneva translation readeth it, I cause my bed every night to swim. So that as the priests used to swim in the molten sea, that they might be pure and clean, against they performed the holy rites and services of the temple, in like manner the princely prophet washeth his bed, yea, he swimmeth in his bed, or rather he causeth his bed to swim in tears, as in a sea of grief and penitent sorrow for his sin. *Thomas Playfere,* 1604.

**Ver. 6.** I water my couch with my tears. Let us water our bed every night with our tears. Do not only blow upon it with intermissive blasts, for then like fire, it will resurge and flame the more. Sin is like a stinking candle newly put out, it is soon lighted again. It may receive a wound, but like a dog it will easily lick itself whole; a little forbearance multiplies it like Hydra's heads. Therefore, whatsoever aspersion the sin of the day has brought upon us, let the tears of the night wash away. *Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 6-7. Soul-trouble is attended usually with great pain of body too, and so a man is wounded and distressed in every part. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, says David. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." Job 6:4. Sorrow of heart contracts the natural spirits, making all their motions slow and feeble; and the poor afflicted body does usually decline and waste away; and, therefore, saith Heman, "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." In this inward distress we find our strength decay and melt, even as wax before the fire; for sorrow darkeneth the spirits, obscures the judgment, blinds the memory, as to all pleasant things, and beclouds the lucid part of the mind, causing the lamp of life to burn weakly. In this troubled condition the person cannot be without a countenance that is pale, and wan, and dejected, like one that is seized with strong fear and consternation; all his motions are sluggish, and no sprightliness nor activity remains. A merry heart doth good, like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Hence come those frequent complaints in Scripture: My moisture is turned into the drought of the summer: I am like a bottle in the smoke; my soul cleaveth unto the dust: my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelid is the shadow of death. Job 16:16, 30:17-19. "My bones are pierced in me, in the night seasons, and my sinews take no rest; by the great force of my disease is my garment changed. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. Many times indeed the trouble of the soul does begin from the weakness and indisposition of the body. Long affliction, without any prospect of remedy, does, in process of time, begin to distress the soul itself. David was a man often exercised with sickness and the rage of enemies; and in all the instances almost that we meet with him in the Psalms, we may observe that the outward occasions of trouble brought him under an apprehension of the wrath of God for his sin. (Ps 6:1-2; and the reasons given, Ps 6:5-6.) All his griefs running into this most terrible thought, that God was his enemy. As little brooks lose themselves in a great river, and change their name and nature, it most frequently happens that when our pain is long and sharp, and helpless and unavoidable, we begin to question the sincerity of our estate toward God, though at its first assault we had few doubts or fears about it. Long weakness of body makes the soul more susceptible of trouble, and uneasy thoughts. *Timothy Rogers on Trouble of Mind.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 6.** Saint's tears in quality, abundance, influence, assuagement, and final end.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 7.** I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all my enemies. As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so, says David, my eye is grown red and feeble through weeping. Conviction sometimes has such an effect upon the body, that even the outward organs are made to suffer. May not this explain some of the convulsions and hysterical attacks which have been experienced under convictions in the revivals in Ireland? Is it surprising that some souls be smitten to the earth, and begin to cry aloud; when we find that David himself made his bed to swim, and grew old while he was under the heavy hand of God? Ah! brethren, it is no light matter to feel one's self a sinner, condemned at the bar of God. The language of this Psalm is not strained and forced, but perfectly natural to one in so sad a plight.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 6-7. Soul-trouble is attended usually with great pain of body too, and so a man is wounded and distressed in every part. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, says David. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." Job 6:4. Sorrow of heart contracts the natural spirits, making all their motions slow and feeble; and the poor afflicted body does usually decline and waste away; and, therefore, saith Heman, "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." In this inward distress we find our strength decay and melt, even as wax before the fire; for sorrow darkeneth the spirits, obscures the judgment, blinds the memory, as to all pleasant things, and beclouds the lucid part of the mind, causing the lamp of life to burn weakly. In this troubled condition the person cannot be without a countenance that is pale, and wan, and dejected, like one that is seized with strong fear and consternation; all his motions are sluggish, and no sprightliness nor activity remains. A merry heart doth good, like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Hence come those frequent complaints in Scripture: My moisture is turned into the drought of the summer: I am like a bottle in the smoke; my soul cleaveth unto the dust: my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelid is the shadow of death. Job 16:16, 30:17-19. "My bones are pierced in me, in the night seasons, and my sinews take no rest; by the great force of my disease is my garment changed. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. Many times indeed the trouble of the soul does begin from the weakness and indisposition of the body. Long affliction, without any prospect of remedy, does, in process of time, begin to distress the soul itself. David was a man often exercised with sickness and the rage of enemies; and in all the instances almost that we meet with him in the Psalms, we may observe that the outward occasions of trouble brought him under an apprehension of the wrath of God for his sin. (Ps 6:1-2; and the reasons given, Ps 5-6.) All his griefs running into this most terrible thought, that God was his enemy. As little brooks lose themselves in a great river, and change their name and nature, it most frequently happens that when our pain is long and sharp, and helpless and unavoidable, we begin to question the sincerity of our estate toward God, though at its first assault we had few doubts or fears about it. Long weakness of body makes the soul more susceptible of trouble, and uneasy thoughts. *Timothy Rogers on Trouble of Mind.*

**Ver. 7.** Mine eye is consumed. Many make those eyes which God hath given them, as it were two lighted candles to let them see to go to hell; and for this God in justice requiteth them, seeing their minds are blinded by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, God, I say, sendeth sickness to debilitate their eyes which were so sharp-sighted in the devil's service, and their lust now causeth them to want the necessary sight of their body.

**Ver. 7.** Mine enemies. The pirates seeing an empty bark, pass by it; but if she be loaded with precious wares, then they will assault her. So, if a man have no grace within him, Satan passeth by him as not a convenient prey for him; but being loaded with graces, as the love of God, his fear, and such other spiritual virtues, let him be persuaded that according as he knows what stuff is in him, so will he not fail to rob him of them, if in any case he may, *Archibald Symson.*

**Ver. 7.** That eye of his that had looked and lusted after his neighbour's wife is now dimmed and darkened with grief and indignation. He has wept himself almost blind. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 7. The voice of weeping. What it is.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 8. Hitherto, all has been mournful and disconsolate, but now —

"Your harps, ye trembling saints, Down from the willows take."

Ye must have your times of weeping, but let them be short. Get ye up, get ye up, from your dunghills! Cast aside your sackcloth and ashes! Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.<

David has found peace, and rising from his knees he begins to sweep his house of the wicked.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. The best remedy for us against an evil man is a long space between us both. "Get ye gone; I can have no fellowship with you." Repentance is a practical thing. It is not enough to bemoan the desecration of the temple of the heart, we must scourge out the buyers and sellers, and overturn the tables of the money changers. A pardoned sinner *will hate the sins* which cost the Saviour his blood. Grace and sin are quarrelsome neighbours, and one or the other must go to the wall.

For the Lord hath hear the voice of my weeping. What a fine Hebraism, and what grand poetry it is in English! "He hath heard the voice of my weeping." Is there a voice in weeping? Does weeping speak? In what language doth it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which is known and understood in all the earth, and even in heaven above. When a man weeps, whether he be a Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, it has the same meaning in it. Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an unstammering orator, needing no interpreter, but understood of all. Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail? Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for thou hearest the voice of my weeping.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 8.** Depart from me, etc., *i.e.,* you may now go your way; for that which you look for, namely, my death, you shall not have at this present; *for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping, i.e.,* has graciously granted me that which with tears I asked of him. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**Ver. 8.** Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. May not too much familiarity with profane wretches be justly charged upon church members? I know man is a sociable creature, but that will not excuse saints as to their carelessness of the choice of their company. The very fowls of the air, and beasts of the field, love not heterogeneous company. "Birds of a feather flock together." I have been afraid that many who would be thought eminent, of a high stature in grace and godliness, yet see not the vast difference there is between nature and regeneration, sin and grace, the old and the new man, seeing all company is alike unto them. *Lewis Stuckley's "Gospel Glass",* 1667.

Ver. 8. The voice of my weeping. Weeping hath a voice, and as music upon the water sounds farther and more harmoniously than upon the land, so prayers, joined with tears, cry louder in God's ears, and make sweeter music than when tears are absent. When Antipater had written a large letter against Alexander's mother unto Alexander, the king answered him, "One tear from my mother will wash away all her faults." So it is with God. A penitent tear is an undeniable ambassador, and never returns from the throne of grace unsatisfied. *Spencer's Things New and Old.*

Ver. 8. The wicked are called, workers of iniquity, because they are free and ready to sin, they have a strong tide and bent of spirit to do evil, and they do it not to halves but thoroughly; they do not only begin or nibble at the bait a little (as a good man often doth), but greedily swallow it down, hook and all; they are fully in it, and do it fully; they make a work of it, and so are *"workers of iniquity." Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 8.** Some may say, "My constitution is such that I cannot weep; I may as well go to squeeze a rock, as think to get a tear." But if thou canst not weep for sin, canst thou grieve? Intellectual mourning is best; there may be sorrow where there are no tears, the vessel may be full though it wants vent; it is not so much the weeping eye God respects as the broken heart; yet I would be loath to stop their tears who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears (Isa 38:5), "I have seen thy tears." David's tears made music in God's ears, The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. It is a sight fit for angels to behold, tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye. *T. Watson.*

**Ver. 8.** The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. God hears the voice of our looks, God hears the voice of our tears sometimes better than the voice of our words; for it is the Spirit itself that makes intercession for us. Ro 8:26. *Gemitibus inenarrabilibus,* in those *groans,* and so in those *tears,* which we *cannot utter; ineloquacibus,* as Tertullian reads that place, devout, and simple tears, which cannot speak, speak aloud in the ears of God; nay, tears which we cannot utter; not only utter the force of the tears, but not utter the very tears themselves. As God sees the water in the spring in the veins of the earth before it bubble upon the face of the earth, so God sees tears in the heart of a man before they blubber his face; God hears the tears of that sorrowful soul, which for sorrow cannot shed tears. From this casting up of the eyes, and pouring out the sorrow of the heart at the eyes, at least opening God a window through which he may see a wet heart through a dry eye; from these overtures of repentance, which are as those imperfect sounds of words, which parents delight in, in their children, before they speak plain, a penitent sinner comes to a verbal and a more expressive prayer. To these prayers, these vocal and verbal prayers from David, God had given ear, and from this hearing of those prayers was David come to this thankful confidence, The Lord hath heard, the Lord will hear. *John Donne.*

**Ver. 8.** What a strange change is here all of a sudden! Well might Luther say, "Prayer is the leech of the soul, that sucks out the venom and swelling thereof." "Prayer," saith another, "is an exorcist with God, and an exorcist against sin and misery." Bernard saith, "How oft hath prayer found me despairing almost, but left me triumphing, and well assured of pardon!" The same in effect saith David here, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." What a word is that to his insulting enemies! Avaunt! come out! vanish! These be words used to devils and dogs, but good enough for a Doeg or a Shimei. And the Son of David shall say the same to his enemies when he comes to judgment. *John Trapp.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 8. *The pardoned sinner forsaking his bad companions.*

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 9.** The Lord hath heard my supplication. The Holy Spirit had wrought into the Psalmist's mind the confidence that his prayer was heard. This is frequently the privilege of the saints. Praying the prayer of faith, they are often infallibly assured that they have prevailed with God. We read of Luther that, having on one occasion wrestled hard with God in prayer, he came leaping out of his closet crying, *"Vicimus, vicimus;"* that is, We have conquered, we have prevailed with God." Assured confidence is no idle dream, for when the Holy Ghost bestows it upon us, we know its reality, and could not doubt it, even though all men should deride our boldness.

The Lord will receive my prayer. Here is past experience used for future encouragement.

He hath, he will. Note this, O believer, and imitate its reasoning.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 9.** The Lord hath heard my supplication, etc. The psalmist three times expresses his confidence of his prayers being heard and received, which may be either in reference to his having prayed so many times for help, as the apostle Paul did (2Co 12:8); and as Christ his antitype did (Mt 26:39,42,44); or to express the certainty of it, the strength of his faith in it, and the exuberance of his joy on account of it. *John Gill, D.D.,* 1697-1771.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 9.** Past answers the ground of present confidence. He *hath, he will.*

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 10.** Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed. This is rather a prophecy than an imprecation, it may be read in the future, "All my enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed." *They shall return and be ashamed instantaneously,—in a moment;—their doom shall come upon them suddenly. Death's day is doom's day, and both are sure and may be sudden. The Romans were wont to say, "The feet of the avenging Deity are shod with wool." With noiseless footsteps vengeance nears its victim, and sudden and overwhelming shall be its destroying stroke. If this were an imprecation, we must remember that the language of the old dispensation is not that of the new. We pray for* our enemies, not *against* them. God have mercy on them, and bring them into the right way.

Thus the Psalm, like those which preceed it, shews the different estates of the godly and the wicked. O Lord, let us be numbered *with* thy people, both now and forever!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

**Ver. 10.** Let all mine enemies be ashamed, etc. If this were an imprecation, a malediction, yet it was medicinal, and had *rationem boni,* a charitable tincture and nature in it; he wished the men no harm as men. But it is rather *predictorium,* a prophetical vehemence, that if they will take no knowledge of God's declaring himself in the protection of his servants, if they would not consider that God had heard, and would hear, had rescued, and would rescue his children, but would continue their opposition against him, heavy judgments would certainly fall upon them; their punishment should be certain, but the effect should be uncertain; for God only knows whether his correction shall work upon his enemies to their mollifying, or to their obduration ... In the second word,

Let them be sore vexed, he wishes his enemies no worse than himself had been, for he had used the same word of himself before, *Ossa turbata, My bones are vexed; and Anima turbata, My soul is vexed;* and considering that David had found this vexation to be his way to God, it was no malicious imprecation to wish that enemy the same physic that he had taken, who was more sick of the same disease than he was. For this is like a troubled sea after a tempest; the danger is past, but yet the billow is great still; the danger was in the calm, in the security, or in the tempest, by misinterpreting God's correction to our obduration, and to a remorseless stupefication; but when a man is come to this holy vexation, to be troubled, to be shaken with the sense of the indignation of God, the storm is past, and the indignation of God is blown over. That soul is in a fair and near way of being restored to a calmness, and to reposed security of conscience that is come to this holy vexation. *John Donne.*

**Ver. 10.** Let all mine enemies or (all mine enemies shall) be ashamed, and sore vexed, etc. Many of the mournful Psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer that he is continually to look forward, and solace himself with beholding that day, when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear becomes a sparkling gem in his crown; when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angels harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty. *George Horne.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 10.** The shame reserved for the wicked.

**÷PSALM 7**

**TITLE.** "Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the word of Cush the Benjamite."—"Shiggaion of David." As far as we can gather from the observations of learned men, and from a comparison of this Psalm with the only other Shiggaion in the Word of God, (Hab 3:1), this title seems to mean "variable songs," with which also the idea of solace and pleasure is associated. Truly our life-psalm is composed of variable verses; one stanza rolls along with the sublime metre of triumph, but another limps with the broken rhythm of complaint. There is much bass in the saint's music here below. Our experience is as variable as the weather in England.

From the title we learn the occasion of the composition of this song. It appears probable that Cush the Benjamite had accused David to Saul of treasonable conspiracy against his royal authority. This the king would be ready enough to credit, both from his jealousy of David, and from the relation which most probably existed between himself, the son of Kish, and this Cush, or Kish, the Benjamite. He who is near the throne can do more injury to a subject than an ordinary slanderer.

This may be called the SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT. Even this sorest of evils may furnish occasion for a Psalm. What a blessing it would be if we could turn even the most disastrous event into a theme for song, and so turn the tables upon our great enemy. Let us learn a lesson from Luther, who once said, "David made Psalms; we also will make Psalms, and sing them as well as we can to the honour of our Lord, and to spite and mock the devil."

**DIVISION.** In the first and second verses the danger is stated, and prayer offered. Then the Psalmist most solemnly avows his innocence. (Ps 7:3-5). The Lord is pleaded with to arise to judgment (Ps 7:6-7). The Lord, sitting upon his throne, hears the renewed appeal of the Slandered Supplicant (Ps 7:8-9). The Lord clears his servant, and threatens the wicked (Ps 7:10-13). The slanderer is seen in vision bringing a curse upon his own head, (Ps 14-16), while David retires from trial singing a hymn of praise to his righteous God. We have here a noble sermon upon that text: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** David appears before God to plead with him against the Accuser, who had charged him with treason and treachery. The case is here opened with an avowal of confidence in God. Whatever may be the emergency of our condition we shall never find it amiss to retain our reliance upon our God.

O Lord my God, mine by a special covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood, and ratified in my own soul by a sense of union to thee; in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust, even now in my sore distress. I shake, but my rock moves not. It is never right to distrust God, and never vain to trust him. And now, with both divine relationship and holy trust to strengthen him, David utters the burden of his desire—save me from all them that persecute me. His pursuers were very many, and any one of them cruel enough to devour him; he cries, therefore, for salvation from them *all.* We should never think our prayers complete until we ask for preservation from *all* sin, and all enemies.

And deliver me, extricate me from their snares, acquit me of their accusations, give a true and just deliverance in this trial of my injured character. See how clearly his case is stated; let us see to it, that we know what we would have when we are come to the throne of mercy. Pause a little while before you pray, that you may not offer the sacrifice of fools. Get a distinct idea of your need, and then you can pray with the more fluency of fervency.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** "Shiggaion," though some have attempted to fix on it a reference to the moral aspect of the world as depicted in this Psalm, is in all probability to be taken as expressing *the nature of the composition. It conveys the idea of something* erratic *(hgv, to wander) in the style; something not so calm as other Psalms; and hence Ewald* suggests, that it might be rendered, "a confused ode," a Dithyramb. This characteristic of excitement in the style, and a kind of disorder in the sense, suits Hab 3:1, the only other place where the word occurs. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm. Whatever might be the occasion of the Psalm, the real subject seems to be the Messiah's appeal to God against the false accusations of his enemies; and the predictions which it contains of the final conversion of the whole world, and of the future judgment, are clear and explicit. *Samuel Horsley, LL.D.,* 1733-1806.

**Ver. 1.** O Lord, my God, in thee do I put my trust. This is the first instance in the Psalms where David addresses the Almighty by the united names Jehovah and my God. No more suitable words can be placed at the beginning of any act of prayer or praise. These names show the ground of the confidence afterward expressed. They "denote at once supreme reverence and the most endearing confidence. They convey a recognition of God's infinite perfections, and of his covenanted and gracious relations." *William S. Plumer.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 1.** The necessity of faith when we address ourselves to God. Show the worthlessness of prayer without trust in the Lord.

Ver. 1-2. Viewed as a prayer for deliverance from all enemies, especially Satan the lion.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** Lest he tear my soul. Here is the plea of fear co-working with the plea of faith. There was one among David's foes mightier that the rest, who had both dignity, strength, and ferocity, and was, therefore, like a lion. From this foe he urgently seeks deliverance. Perhaps this was Saul, his royal enemy; but in our own case there is one who goes about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, concerning whom we should ever cry, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Notice the vigour of the description—rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. It is a picture from the shepherd-life of David. When the fierce lion had pounced upon the defenceless lamb, and had made it his prey, he would rend the victim in pieces, break all the bones, and devour all, because no shepherd was near to protect the lamb or rescue it from the ravenous beast. This is a soul-moving portrait of a saint delivered over to the will of Satan. This will make the bowels of Jehovah yearn. A father cannot be silent when a child is in such peril. No, he will not endure the thought of his darling in the jaws of a lion, he will arise and deliver his persecuted one. Our God is very pitiful, and he will surely rescue his people from so desperate a destruction. It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured. Slander leaves a slur, even if it be wholly disproved. Common fame, although notoriously a common liar, has very many believers. Once let an ill word get into men's mouths, and it is not easy to get it fully out again. The Italians say that good repute is like the cypress, once cut it never puts forth leaf again; this is not true if our character be cut by a stranger's hand, but even then it will not soon regain its former verdure. Oh, 'tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 2.** Lest he tear my soul like a lion, etc. It is reported of tigers, that they enter into a rage upon the scent of fragrant spices; so do ungodly men at the blessed savour of godliness. I have read of some barbarous nations, who, when the sun shines hot upon them, they shoot up their arrows against it; so do wicked men at the light and heat of godliness. There is a natural antipathy between the spirits of godly men and the wicked. Ge 3:15. "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed." *Jeremiah Burroughs,* 1660.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

Ver 1-2. Viewed as a prayer for deliverance from all enemies, especially Satan the lion.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 3-5. The second part of this wandering hymn contains a protestation of innocence, and an invocation of wrath upon his own head, if he were not clear from the evil imputed to him. So far from hiding treasonable intentions in his hands, or ungratefully requiting the peaceful deeds of a friend, he had even suffered his enemy to escape when he had him completely in his power. Twice had he spared Saul's life; once in the cave of Adullam, and again when he found him sleeping in the midst of his slumbering camp: he could, therefore, with a clear conscience, make his appeal to heaven. He needs not fear the curse whose soul is clear of guilt. Yet is the imprecation a most solemn one, and only justifiable through the extremity of the occasion, and the nature of the dispensation under which the Psalmist lived. *We* are commanded by our Lord Jesus to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay: "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." If we cannot be believed on our word, we are surely not to be trusted on our oath; for to a true Christian his simple word is as binding as another man's oath. Especially beware, O unconverted men! of trifling with solemn imprecations. Remember the woman at Devizes, who wished she might die if she had not paid her share in a joint purchase, and who fell dead there and then with the money in her hand.

Selah. David enhances the solemnity of this appeal to the dread tribunal of God by the use of the usual pause.

From these verses we may learn that no innocence can shield a man from the calumnies of the wicked. David had been scrupulously careful to avoid any appearance of rebellion against Saul, whom he constantly styled "the Lord's anointed;" but all this could not protect him from lying tongues. As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumors which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men's characters will be safe. Ill-will never spoke well. Sinners have an ill-will to saints, and therefore, be sure they will not speak well of them.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3.** O Lord, my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands. In the primitive times the people of God were then a people under great reproach. What strange things does Tertullian tell us they reproached them withal; as that in their meetings they made Thyestes suppers, who invited his brother to a supper, and presented him with a dish of his own flesh. They charged them with uncleanness because they met in the night (for they durst not meet in the day,) and said, they blew out the candles when they were together, and committed filthiness. They reproached them for ignorance, saying, they were all unlearned; and therefore the heathens in Tertullian's time used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head, and a book in his hand to signify that though they pretended learning, yet they were an unlearned, silly people, rude and ignorant. Bishop Jewel in his sermon upon Lu 11:5, cites this out of Tertullian, and applies it to his time:—"Do not our adversaries do the like," saith he, "at this day, against all those that profess the gospel of Christ? Oh, say they, who are they that favour this way? they are none but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as were never at the university;" they are the bishop's own words. He cites likewise Tertullian a little after, saying, that the Christians were accounted the public enemies of the State. And Josephus tells us of Apollinaris, speaking concerning the Jews and Christians, that they were more foolish than any barbarian. And Paulus Fagius reports a story of an Egyptian, concerning the Christians, who said, "They were a gathering together of a most filthy, lecherous people;" and for the keeping of the Sabbath, he says, "they had a disease that was upon them, and they were fain to rest the seventh day because of that disease." And so in Augustine's time, he hath this expression, "Any one that begins to be godly, presently he must prepare to suffer reproach from the tongues of adversaries;" and this was their usual manner of reproach, "What shall we have of you, an Elias? a Jeremy?" And Nazianzen, in one of his orations says, "It is ordinary to reproach, that I cannot think to go free myself." And so Athanasius, they called him Sathanasius, because he was a special instrument against the Arians. And Cyprian, they called him Coprian, one that gathers up dung, as if all the excellent things that he had gathered in his works was but dung. *Jeremiah Burroughs.*

**Ver. 3.** If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands. I deny not but you may, and ought to be sensible of the wrong done to your name, for as "a good name is a precious ointment" (So 1:3), so to have an evil name is a great judgment; and therefore you ought not to be insensible of the wrong done to your name by slanders and reproaches, saying, "Let men speak of me what they please, I care not, so long as I know mine own innocency," for though the testimony of your own innocency be a ground of comfort unto you, yet your care must be not only to approve yourselves unto God, but also unto men, to be as careful of your good names as possibly ye can; but yet you are not to manifest any distemper or passion upon the reproachful speeches of others against you. *Thomas Gouge,* 1660.

**Ver. 3.** It is a sign that there is some good in thee if a wicked world abuse thee. *"Quid mali feci?"* said Socrates, what evil have I done that this bad man commends me? The applause of the wicked usually denotes some evil, and their censure imports some good. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 3.** If there be iniquity in my hands. Injustice is ascribed to the *hand,* not because injustice as always, though usually it be, done by the hand. With the hand men take away, and with that men detain the right of others. David speaks thus (1Ch 12:17), "Seeing there is no wrong in mine hands;" that is, I have done no wrong. *Joseph Caryl.*

Ver. 3-4. A good conscience is a flowing spring of assurance. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2Co 1:12. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." 1Jo 3:21. A good conscience has sure confidence. He who has it sits in the midst of all combustions and distractions, Noah-like, all sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. What the probationer disciple said to our Saviour, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," that a good conscience says to the believing soul; I will stand by thee; I will strengthen thee; I will uphold thee; I will be a comfort to thee in life, and a friend to thee in death. "Though all should leave thee, yet will I never forsake thee," *Thomas Brooks.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 3.** Self-vindication before men. When possible, judicious, or serviceable. With remarks upon the spirit in which it should be attempted.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 3-5. The second part of this wandering hymn contains a protestation of innocence, and an invocation of wrath upon his own head, if he were not clear from the evil imputed to him. So far from hiding treasonable intentions in his hands, or ungratefully requiting the peaceful deeds of a friend, he had even suffered his enemy to escape when he had him completely in his power. Twice had he spared Saul's life; once in the cave of Adullam, and again when he found him sleeping in the midst of his slumbering camp: he could, therefore, with a clear conscience, make his appeal to heaven. He needs not fear the curse whose soul is clear of guilt. Yet is the imprecation a most solemn one, and only justifiable through the extremity of the occasion, and the nature of the dispensation under which the Psalmist lived. *We* are commanded by our Lord Jesus to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay: "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." If we cannot be believed on our word, we are surely not to be trusted on our oath; for to a true Christian his simple word is as binding as another man's oath. Especially beware, O unconverted men! of trifling with solemn imprecations. Remember the woman at Devizes, who wished she might die if she had not paid her share in a joint purchase, and who fell dead there and then with the money in her hand.

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

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**Ver. 4.** Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy. Meaning Saul, whose life he twice preserved, once in Engedi, and again when he slept on the plain. *John Gill.*

**Ver. 4.** If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me. To do evil for good, is human corruption; to do good for good, is civil retribution; but to good for evil, is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace. *William Secker.*

**Ver. 4.** Then is grace victorious, and then hath a man a noble and brave spirit, not when he is overcome by evil (for that argueth weakness), but when he can overcome evil. And it is God's way to shame the party that did the wrong, and to overcome him too; it is the best way to get the victory over him. When David had Saul at an advantage in the cave, and cut off the lap of his garment, and did forbear any act of revenge against him, Saul was melted, and said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I." 1Sa 24:17. Though he had such a hostile mind against him, and chased and pursued him up and down, yet when David forbear revenge when it was in his power, it overcame him, and he falls a-weeping. *Thomas Manton.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 4.** The best revenge. Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like.

**EXPOSITION**

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From these verses we may learn that no innocence can shield a man from the calumnies of the wicked. David had been scrupulously careful to avoid any appearance of rebellion against Saul, whom he constantly styled "the Lord's anointed;" but all this could not protect him from lying tongues. As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumors which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men's characters will be safe. Ill-will never spoke well. Sinners have an ill-will to saints, and therefore, be sure they will not speak well of them.

EXPLANATORY NOTE AND QUAINT SAYINGS

**Ver. 5.** Let him tread down my life upon the earth. The allusion here is to the manner in which the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men in the dust. The idea of David is, that if he was guilty he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn. *Albert Barnes, in loc.*

**Ver. 5.** Mine honour in the dust. When Achilles dragged the body of Hector in the dust around the walls of Troy, he did but carry out the usual manners of those barbarous ages. David dares in his conscious innocence to imprecate such an ignominious fate upon himself if indeed the accusation of the black Benjamite be true. He had need have a golden character who dares to challenge such an ordeal. *C.H.S.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 6.** We now listen to a fresh prayer, based upon the avowal which he has just made. We cannot pray too often, and when our heart is true, we shall turn to God in prayer as naturally as the needle to its pole.

Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. His sorrow makes him view the Lord as a judge who had left the judgment-seat and retired into his rest. Faith would move the Lord to avenge the quarrel of his saints.

Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies—a still stronger figure to express his anxiety that the Lord would assume his authority and mount the throne. Stand up, O God, rise thou above them all, and let thy justice tower above their villainies.

Awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. This is a bolder utterance still, for it implies sleep as well as inactivity, and can only be applied to God in a very limited sense. He never slumbers, yet doth he often seem to do so; for the wicked prevail, and the saints are trodden in the dust. God's silence is the patience of longsuffering, and if wearisome to the saints, they should bear it cheerfully in the hope that sinners may thereby be led to repentance.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 6.** The judgment which thou hast ordained. In the end of the verse he shows that he asks nothing but what is according to the appointment of God. And this is the rule which ought to be observed by us in our prayers; we should in everything conform our requests to the divine will, as John also instructs us. 1Jo 4:14. And, indeed, we can never pray in faith unless we attend, in the first place, to what God commands, that our minds may not rashly and at random start aside in desiring more than we are permitted to desire and pray for. David, therefore, in order to pray aright, reposes himself on the word and promise of God; and the import of his exercise is this: Lord, I am not led by ambition, or foolish headstrong passion, or depraved desire, inconsiderately to ask from thee whatever is pleasing to my flesh; but it is the clear light of thy word which directs me, and upon it I securely depend. *John Calvin.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 6.** How and in what sense divine anger may become the hope of the righteous.

Fire fought by fire, or man's anger overcome by God's anger.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about. Thy saints shall crowd to thy tribunal with their complaints, or shall surround it with their solemn homage:

for their sakes therefore return thou on high. As when a judge travels at the assizes, all men take their cases to his court that they may be heard, so will the righteous gather to their Lord. Here he fortifies himself in prayer by pleading that if the Lord will mount the throne of judgment, multitudes of the saints would be blessed as well as himself. If I be too base to be remembered, yet,

for their sakes, for the love thou bearest to thy chosen people, come forth from thy secret pavilion, and sit in the gate dispensing justice among the people. When my suit includes the desires of all the righteous it shall surely speed, for, "shall not God avenge his own elect?"

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 7.** The congregation of the people: either, 1. A great number of all sorts of people, who shall observe thy justice, and holiness, and goodness in pleading my righteous cause against my cruel and implacable oppressor. Or rather, 2. The whole body of thy people Israel, by whom both these Hebrew words are commonly ascribed in Holy Scripture.

Compass thee about; they will, and I, as their king and ruler in thy stead, will take care that they shall come from all parts and meet together to worship thee, which in Saul's time they have grossly neglected, and been permitted to neglect, and to offer to thee praises and sacrifices for thy favour to me, and for the manifold benefits which they shall enjoy by my means, and under my government.

For their sakes; or, *for its sake, i.e.,* for the sake of thy congregation, which now is woefully dissipated and oppressed, and has in a great measure lost all administration of justice, and exercise of religion.

Return thou on high, or, *return to thy high place,i.e.* to thy tribunal, to sit there and judge my cause. An allusion to earthly tribunals, which generally are set up on high above the people. 1Ki 10:19. *Matthew Poole,* 1624-1679.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 7.** The congregation of the people.

1. Who they are.  
2. Why they congregate together with one another.  
3. Where they congregate.  
4. Why they choose such a person to be the centre of their congregation.

**Ver. 7.** The gathering of the saints around the Lord Jesus.

Ver. 7 *(last clause).* The coming of Christ to judgment for the good of his saints.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 8.** If I am not mistaken, David has now seen in the eye of his mind the Lord ascending to his judgment-seat, and beholding him seated there in royal state, he draws near to him to urge his suit anew. In the last two verses he besought Jehovah to arise, and now that he is arisen, he prepares to mingle with "the congregation of the people" who compass the Lord about. The royal heralds proclaim the opening of the court with the solemn words,

The Lord shall judge the people. Our petitioner rises at once, and cries with earnestness and humility,

Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. His hand is on an honest heart, and his cry is to a righteous Judge.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 8.** Believers! let not the terror of that day dispirit you when you meditate upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him and the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads when they think of his coming; but lift ye up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer, and your Advocate. Ye must appear before the judgment-seat; but ye shall not come into condemnation. His coming will not be against you, but for you. It is otherwise with unbelievers, a *neglected Saviour* will be a *severe Judge. Thomas Boston,* 1676-1732.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 8.** The character of the Judge before whom we all must stand.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 9.** He sees a smile of complacency upon the face of the King, and in the name of all the assembled congregation he cries aloud,

Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just. Is not this the universal longing of the whole company of the elect? When shall we be delivered from the filthy conversation of these men of Sodom? When shall we escape from the filthiness of Mesech and the blackness of the tents of Kedar? What a solemn and weighty truth is contained in the last sentence of the ninth verse! How deep is the divine knowledge!—

He trieth. How strict, how accurate, how intimate his search!—

he trieth the hearts, the secret thoughts,

and reins, the inward affections. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

**Ver. 9.** The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. As common experience shows that the workings of the mind, particularly the passions of joy, grief, and fear, have a very remarkable effect on the *reins* or *kidneys.* (See Pr 23:16; Ps 73:21), so from their retired situation in the body, and their being hid in fat, they are often used to denote the most secret workings and affections of the soul. And to "see or examine the *reins,"* is to see or examine those most secret thoughts or desires of the soul. *John Parkhurst,* 1762.

**Ver. 9.** *(last clause). "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins."*

"I that alone am infinite, can try How deep within itself thine heart doth lie.  
Thy seamen's plummet can but reach the ground, I find that which thine heart itself ne'er found.

*Francis Quarles,* 1592-1644.

**Ver. 9.** The heart, may signify the cogitations, and the reins the affections. Henry Ainsworth.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 9.** *(first clause).*

(1) By changing their hearts; or (2) by restraining their wills, (3) or depriving them of power, (4) or removing them.

Show the times when, the reasons why, such a prayer should be offered, and how, in the first sense, we may labour for its accomplishment.

**Ver. 9.** This verse contains two grand prayers, and a noble proof that the Lord can grant them.

**Ver. 9.** The period of sin, and the perpetuity of the righteous. *Matthew Henry.*

**Ver. 9.** Establish the just. By what means and in what sense the just are established, or, the true established church.

**Ver. 9.** *(last clause).* God's trial of men's hearts.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 10.** The judge has heard the cause, has cleared the guiltless, and uttered his voice against the persecutors. Let us draw near, and learn the results of the great assize. Yonder is the slandered one with his harp in hand, hymning the justice of his Lord, and rejoicing aloud in his own deliverance.

My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. Oh, how good to have a true and *upright* heart. Crooked sinners, with all their craftiness, are foiled by the upright in heart. God defends the right. Filth will not long abide on the pure white garments of the saints, but shall be brushed off by divine providence, to the vexation of the men by whose base hands it was thrown upon the godly. When God shall try our cause, our sun has risen, and the sun of the wicked is set for ever. Truth, like oil, is ever above, no power of our enemies can drown it; we shall refute their slanders in the day when the trumpet wakes the dead, and we shall shine in honour when lying lips are put to silence. O believer, fear not all that thy foes can do or say against thee, for the tree which God plants no winds can hurt.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

**Ver. 10.** My defense is of God. Literally, *"My shield is upon God,"* like Ps 62:8, "My salvation is upon God." The idea may be taken from the armour-bearer, ever ready at hand to give the needed weapon to the warrior. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 10.** Upright in heart. Explain the character.

**Ver. 10.** The believer's trust in God, and God's care over him. Show the action of faith in procuring defence and protection, and of that defence upon our faith by strengthening it, etc.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 11.** God judgeth the righteous, he hath not given thee up to be condemned by the lips of persecutors. Thine enemies cannot sit on God's throne, nor blot thy name out of his book. Let them alone, then, for God will find time for his revenge.

God is angry with the wicked every day. He not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with; he can be angry, nay, he is angry to-day and every day with you, ye ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days. From the beginning of the year even to its ending, there is not an hour in which God's oven is not hot, and burning in readiness for the wicked, who shall be as stubble.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 11.** God judgeth the righteous, etc. Many learned disputes have arisen as to the meaning of this verse; and it must be confessed that its real import is by no means easily determined: without the words written in italics, which are not in the original, it will read thus, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry every day." The question still will be, is this a good rendering? To this question it may be replied, that there is strong evidence for a contrary one. AINSWORTH translates it, "God is a just judge; and God angrily threateneth every day." With this corresponds the reading of COVERDALE'S Bible, "God is a righteous judge, and God is ever threatening." In King Edward's Bible, of 1549, the reading is the same. But there is another class of critics who adopt quite a different view of the text, and apparently with much colour of argument. BISHOP HORSLEY read the verse, "God is a righteous judge, although he is not angry every day." In this rendering he seems to have followed most of the ancient versions. The VULGATE read it, "God is a judge, righteous, strong, and patient; will he be angry every day?" The SEPTUAGINT reads it, "God is a righteous judge, strong, and longsuffering; not bringing forth his anger every day." The SYRIAC has it, "God is the judge of righteousness; he is not angry every day." In this view of the text Dr. A. Clarke agrees, and expresses it as his opinion that the text was first corrupted by the CHALDEE. This learned divine proposes to restore the text thus, "(la), *el,* with the vowel point tseri, signifies God; (la), *al,* the same letters, with the point *pathach,* signifies *not.*" There is by this view of the original no repetition of the divine name in the verse, so that it will simply read, as thus restored, "God is a righteous judge, and is NOT angry every day." The text at large, as is intimated in the VULGATE, SEPTUAGINT, and some other ancient versions, conveys a strong intimation of the longsuffering of God, whose hatred of sin is unchangeable, but whose anger against transgressors is marked by infinite patience, and does not burst forth in vengeance every day. *John Morrison, in "An Exposition of the Book of Psalms,"* 1829.

**Ver. 11.** God is angry. The original expression here is very forcible. The true idea of it appears to be, to *froth or foam at the mouth* with indignation. *Richard Mant, D.D.,* 1824.

Ver. 11-12. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can show what nature they have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul, and member of body, are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is written all with woes and curses, so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written. *William Gurnall.*

Ver. 11-13. The idea of God's righteousness must have possessed great vigour to render such a representation possible. There are some excellent remarks upon the ground of it in Luther, who, however, too much overlooks the fact, that the psalmist presents before his eyes this form of an angry and avenging God, primarily with the view of strengthening by its consideration his own hope, and pays too little regard to the distinction between the psalmist, who only indirectly teaches what he described as part of his own inward experience, and the prophet: "The prophet takes a lesson from a coarse human similitude, in order that he might inspire terror unto the ungodly. For he speaks against stupid and hardened people, who would not apprehend the reality of a divine judgment, of which he had just spoken; but they might possibly be brought to consider this by greater earnestness on the part of man. Now, the prophet is not satisfied with thinking of the sword, but adds thereto the bow; even this does not satisfy him, but he describes how it is already stretched, and aim is taken, and the arrows are applied to it as here follows. So hard, stiff-necked and unabashed are the ungodly, that however many threatenings may be urged against them, they will still remain unmoved. But in these words he forcibly describes how God's anger presses hard upon the ungodly, though they will never understand this until they actually experience it. It is also to be remarked here, that we have had so frightful a threatening and indignation against the ungodly in no Psalm before this; neither has the Spirit of God attacked them with so many words. Then in the following verses, he also recounts their plans and purposes, shows how these shall not be in vain, but shall return again upon their own head. So that it clearly and manifestly appears that to all those who suffer wrong and reproach, as a matter of consolation, that God hates such revilers and slanderers above all other characters. *E. W. Hengstenberg, in loc.,* 1845.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 11.** The Judge, and the two persons upon their trial.

**Ver. 11.** *(second clause).* God's present, daily, constant, and vehement anger, against the wicked.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 12.** If he turn not, he will whet his sword. What blows are those which will be dealt by that long uplifted arm! God's sword has been sharpening upon the revolving stone of our daily wickedness, and if we will not repent, it will speedily cut us in pieces. Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative. He hath bent his bow and made it ready.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 11-12. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can show what nature they have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul, and member of body, are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is written all with woes and curses, so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written. *William Gurnall.*

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**Ver. 12.** If he turn not, etc. How few do believe what a quarrel God hath with wicked men? And that not only with the loose, but the formal and hypocritical also? If we did we would tremble as much to be among them as to be in a house that is falling; we would endeavour to "save" ourselves "from this untoward generation." The apostle would not so have adjured them, so charged, so entreated them, had he not known the danger of wicked company. *"God is angry with the wicked every day;" his bow is bent, the arrows are on the string;* the instruments for their ruin are all prepared. And is it safe to be there where the arrows of God are ready to fly about our ears? How was the apostle afraid to be in the bath with Cerinthus! "Depart," saith God by Moses, "from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." How have the baskets of good figs suffered with the bad! Is it not prejudicial to the gold to be with the dross? Lot had been ruined by his neighbourhood to the Sodomites if God had not wrought wonderfully for his deliverance. Will you put God to work miracles to save you from your ungodly company? It is dangerous being in the road with thieves whilst God's hue and cry of vengeance is at their backs. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." The very beasts may instruct you to consult better for your security: the very deer are afraid of a wounded chased deer, and therefore for their preservation thrust him out of their company. *Lewis Stuckley.*

**Ver. 12.** If he turn not, he will whet his sword, etc. The whetting of the sword is but to give a keener edge that it may cut the deeper. God is silent as long as the sinner will let him; but when the sword is whet, it is to cut; and when the bow is bent, it is to kill; and woe be to that man who is the butt. *William Secker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 12.** See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 106. "Turn or Burn."

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 13. Even now the thirsty arrow longs to wet itself with the blood of the *persecutor.* The bow is bent, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, and what, O sinner, if the arrow should be let fly at thee even now! Remember, God's arrows never miss the mark, and are, every one of them, "instruments of death." Judgment may tarry, but it will not come too late. The Greek proverb saith, "The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 11-13. The idea of God's righteousness must have possessed great vigour to render such a representation possible. There are some excellent remarks upon the ground of it in Luther, who, however, too much overlooks the fact, that the psalmist presents before his eyes this form of an angry and avenging God, primarily with the view of strengthening by its consideration his own hope, and pays too little regard to the distinction between the psalmist, who only indirectly teaches what he described as part of his own inward experience, and the prophet: "The prophet takes a lesson from a coarse human similitude, in order that he might inspire terror unto the ungodly. For he speaks against stupid and hardened people, who would not apprehend the reality of a divine judgment, of which he had just spoken; but they might possibly be brought to consider this by greater earnestness on the part of man. Now, the prophet is not satisfied with thinking of the sword, but adds thereto the bow; even this does not satisfy him, but he describes how it is already stretched, and aim is taken, and the arrows are applied to it as here follows. So hard, stiff-necked and unabashed are the ungodly, that however many threatenings may be urged against them, they will still remain unmoved. But in these words he forcibly describes how God's anger presses hard upon the ungodly, though they will never understand this until they actually experience it. It is also to be remarked here, that we have had so frightful a threatening and indignation against the ungodly in no Psalm before this; neither has the Spirit of God attacked them with so many words. Then in the following verses, he also recounts their plans and purposes, shows how these shall not be in vain, but shall return again upon their own head. So that it clearly and manifestly appears that to all those who suffer wrong and reproach, as a matter of consolation, that God hates such revilers and slanderers above all other characters. *E. W. Hengstenberg, in loc.,* 1845.

**Ver. 13.** He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. It is said that God hath ordained his arrows against the persecutors; the word signifies such as burn in anger and malice against the godly; and the word translated *ordained,* signifies God hath wrought his arrows; he doth not shoot them at random, but he works them against the wicked. Illiricus hath a story which may well be a commentary upon this text in both the parts of it. One Felix, Earl of Wartenber, one of the captains of the Emperor Charles the 5th, swore in the presence of divers at supper, that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans. Here was one that burned in malice, but behold how God works his arrows against him; that very night the hand of God so struck him, that he was strangled and choked in his own blood; so he rode not, but bathed himself, not up to the spurs, but up to the throat, not in the blood of the Lutherans, but in his own blood before he died. *Jeremiah Burroughs.*

**Ver. 13.** He ordaineth his arrows, This might more exactly be rendered, "He maketh his arrows burning." This image would seem to be deduced from the use of fiery arrows. *John Kitto,* 1804-1854.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 14.** In three graphic pictures we see the slanderer's history. A woman in travail furnishes the first metaphor.

He travaileth with iniquity. He is full of it, pained until he can carry it out, he longs to work his will, he is full of pangs until his evil intent is executed.

He hath conceived mischief. This is the original of his base design. The devil has had doings with him, and the virus of evil is in him. And now behold the progeny of this unhallowed conception. The child is worthy of its father, his name of old was,"the father of lies," and the birth doth not belie the parent, for

*he brought forth falsehood.* Thus, one figure is carried out to perfection; the Psalmist now illustrates his meaning by another, taken from the stratagems of the hunter.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 14.** Behold he travaileth with iniquity, etc. The words express the *conception, birth, carriage* and *miscarriage,* of a *plot* against David. In which you may consider:—(1.) What his *enemies* did. (2.) What God did. (3.) What we *all* should do: his enemies' *intention,* God's *prevention,* and our *duty;* his enemies' intention, *he travaileth with iniquity, and conceiveth mischief;* God's prevention, *he brought forth a lie;* our duty, *Behold* ... Observe the aggravation of the sin, *he conceiveth.* He was not put upon it, or forced into it: it was voluntary. The more liberty we have not to sin, makes our sin the greater. He did not this in passion, but in cold blood. The less will, less sin. *Richard Sibbs.*

**Ver. 14.** He travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief. All note that conceiving is before travailing, but here travailing, as a woman in labour, goeth first; the reason whereof is, that the wicked are so hotly set upon the evil which they maliciously intend, that they would be immediately acting of it if they could tell how, even before they have conceived by what means; but in fine they bring forth but a lie, that is, they find that their own hearts lied to them, when they promised good success, but they had evil. For their haste to perpetrate mischief is intimated in the word rendered *"persecutors"* (Ps 7:13), which properly signifieth *ardentes, burning;* that is, with a desire to do mischief—and this admits of no delay. A notable common-place, both setting forth the evil case of the wicked, especially attempting anything against the righteous, to move them to repentance—for thou hast God for thine enemy warring against thee, whose force thou canst not resist—and the greedy desire of the wicked to be evil, but their conception shall all prove abortive. *J. Mayer, in loc.*

**Ver. 14.** And hath brought forth falsehood. Every sin is a lie.

*Augustine.*

**Ver. 14.** "Earth's entertainments are like those of Jael.  
Her left hand brings me milk, her right, a nail."

*Thomas Fuller.*

Ver. 14-15. They have digged a pit for us—and that low, unto hell—and are fallen into it themselves.

"No juster law can be devised or made, Than that sin's agents fall by their own trade."

The order of hell proceeds with the same degrees; though it give a greater portion, yet still a just proportion, of torment. These wretched guests were too busy with the waters of sin; behold, now they are in the depth of a pit, "where no water is." Dives, that wasted so many tuns of wine, cannot now procure water, not a pot of water, not a handful of water, not a drop of water, to cool his tongue. *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam.* (Augustine Hom. 7) A just recompense! He would not give a crumb; he shall not have a drop. Bread hath no smaller fragment than a crumb, water no less fraction than a drop. As he denied the least comfort to Lazarus living, so Lazarus shall not bring him the least comfort dead. Thus the pain for sin answers the pleasure of sin ... Thus damnable sins shall have semblable punishments; and as Augustine of the tongue, so we may say of any member ... If it will not serve God in action, it shall serve him in passion. *Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14-16. Illustrate by three figures the devices and defeat of persecutors.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 15.** He made a pit, and digged it. He was cunning in his plans, and industrious in his labours. He stooped to the dirty work of digging. He did not fear to soil his own hands, he was willing to work in a *ditch* if others might fall therein. What mean things men will do to wreak revenge on the godly. They hunt for good men, as if they were brute beasts; nay, they will not give them the fair chase afforded to the hare or the fox, but must secretly entrap them, because they can neither run them down nor shoot them down. Our enemies will not meet us to the face, for they fear us as much as they pretend to despise us. But let us look on to the end of the scene. The verse says, he

is fallen into the ditch which he made. Ah! there he is, let us laugh at his disappointment. Lo! he is himself the beast, he has hunted his own soul, and the chase has brought him a goodly victim. Aha, aha, so should it ever be. Come hither and make merry with this entrapped hunter, this biter who has bitten himself. Give him no pity, for it will be wasted on such a wretch. He is but rightly and richly rewarded by being paid in his own coin. He cast forth evil from his mouth, and it has fallen into his bosom. He has set his own house on fire with the torch which he lit to burn a neighbour. He sent forth a foul bird, and it has come back to its nest.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 14-15. They have digged a pit for us—and that low, unto hell —and are fallen into it themselves.

"No juster law can be devised or made, Than that sin's agents fall by their own trade."

The order of hell proceeds with the same degrees; though it give a greater portion, yet still a just proportion, of torment. These wretched guests were too busy with the waters of sin; behold, now they are in the depth of a pit, "where no water is." Dives, that wasted so many tuns of wine, cannot now procure water, not a pot of water, not a handful of water, not a drop of water, to cool his tongue. *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam.* (Augustine Hom. 7) A just recompense! He would not give a crumb; he shall not have a drop. Bread hath no smaller fragment than a crumb, water no less fraction than a drop. As he denied the least comfort to Lazarus living, so Lazarus shall not bring him the least comfort dead. Thus the pain for sin answers the pleasure of sin ... Thus damnable sins shall have semblable punishments; and as Augustine of the tongue, so we may say of any member ... If it will not serve God in action, it shall serve him in passion. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 15.** He made a pit, and digged it. The practice of making pitfalls was anciently not only employed for ensnaring wild beasts, but was also a stratagem used against men by the enemy, in time of war. The idea, therefore, refers to a man who, having made such a pit, whether for man or beast, and covered it over so as completely to disguise the danger, did himself inadvertently tread on his own trap, and fall into the pit he had prepared for another. *Pictorial Bible.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14-16. Illustrate by three figures the devices and defeat of persecutors.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 16.** The rod which he lifted on high, has smitten his own back. He shot an arrow upward, and it has returned upon his own head. He hurled a stone at another and it has come down upon his own pate. Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost. Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him." (Ps 109:17.) How often has this been the case in the histories of both ancient and modern times. Men have burned their own fingers when they were hoping to brand their neighbour. And if this does not happen now, it will hereafter. The Lord has caused dogs to lick the blood of Ahab in the midst of the vineyard of Naboth. Sooner or later the evil deeds of persecutors have always leaped back into their arms. So it will be in the last great day, when Satan's fiery darts shall all be quivered in his own heart, and all his followers shall reap the harvest which they themselves have sown.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 16.** That most witty of commentators, Old Master Trapp, tells the following notable anecdote, in illustration of this verse:—That was a very remarkable instance of Dr. Story, who, escaping out of prison in Queen Elizabeth's days, got to Antwerp, and there thinking himself out of the reach of God's rod, he got commission under the Duke of Alva to search all ships coming thither for English books. But one Parker, an English merchant, trading for Antwerp, laid his snare fair (saith our chronicler), to catch this foul bird, causing secret notice to be given to Story, that in his ship were stores of heretical books, with other intelligence that might stand him in stead. The Canonist conceiving that all was quite sure, hasted to the ship, where, with looks very big upon the poor mariners, each cabin, chest, and corner above-board were searched, and some things found to draw him further on: so that the hatches must be opened, which seemed to be unwillingly done, and great signs of fear were showed by their faces. This drew on the Doctor to descend into the hold, where now in the trap the mouse might well gnaw, but could not get out, for the hatches were down, and the sails hoisted up, which, with a merry gale, were blown into England, where ere long he was arraigned, and condemned of high treason, and accordingly executed at Tyburn, as he had well deserven.

**Ver. 16.** The story of Phalaris's bull, invented for the torment of others, and serving afterwards for himself, is notorious in heathen story ... It was a voluntary judgment which Archbishop Cranmer inflicted on himself when he thrust that very hand into the fire, and burnt it, with which he had signed to the popish articles, crying out, *"Oh, my unworthy right hand!"* but who will deny that the hand of the Almighty was also concerned in it? *William Turner in "Divine Judgments by way of Retaliation",* 1697.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 14-16. Illustrate by three figures the devices and defeat of persecutors.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 17.** We conclude with the joyful contrast. In this all these Psalms are agreed; they all exhibit the blessedness of the righteous, and make its colours the more glowing by contrast with the miseries of the wicked. The bright jewel sparkles in a black foil. *Praise* is the occupation of the godly, their eternal work, and their present pleasure. *Singing* is the fitting embodiment for praise, and therefore do the saints make melody before the Lord Most High. The slandered one is now a singer: his harp was unstrung for a very little season, and now we leave him sweeping its harmonious chords, and flying on their music to the third heaven of adoring praise.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 17.** To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless him for miseries is the way to remove them: no good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured. *William Dyer.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 17.** The excellent duty of praise.

**Ver. 17.** View the verse in connection with the subject of the Psalm, and show how the deliverance of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked are themes for song.

**÷PSALM 8**

**TITLE.** "To the Chief Musician upon Gittith, a Psalm of David." We are not clear upon the meaning of the word Gittith. Some think it refers to Gath, and may refer to a tune commonly sung there, or an instrument of music there invented, or a song of Obededom the Gittite, in whose house the ark rested, or, better still, a song sung over Goliath of Gath. Others, tracing the Hebrew to its root, conceive it to mean a song for the winepress, a joyful hymn for the treaders of grapes. The term Gittith is applied to two other Ps 81:1-16, 84:1-12) both of which, being of a joyous character, it may be concluded, that where we find that word in the title, we may look for a hymn of delight. We may style this Psalm the Song of the Astronomer: let us go abroad and sing it beneath the starry heavens at eventide, for it is very probable that in such a position, it first occurred to the poet's mind. Dr. Chalmers says, "There is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky; to lift the soul to pious contemplation. That moon, and these stars, what are they? They are detached from the world, and they lift us above it. We feel withdrawn from the earth, and rise in lofty abstraction from this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind abandons itself to reverie, and is transferred in the ecstasy of its thought to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty."

**DIVISION.** The first and last verses are a sweet song of admiration, in which the excellence of the name of God is extolled. The intermediate verses are made up of holy wonder at the Lord's greatness in creation, and at his condescension towards man. Poole, in his annotations, has well said, "It is a great question among interpreters, whether this Psalm speaks of man in general, and of the honour which God puts upon him in his creation; or only of the man Christ Jesus. Possibly both may be reconciled and put together, and the controversy if rightly stated, may be ended, for the scope and business of this Psalm seems plainly to be this: to display and celebrate the great love and kindness of God to mankind, not only in his creation, but especially in his redemption by Jesus Christ, whom, as he was man, he advanced to the honour and dominion here mentioned, that he might carry on his great and glorious work. So Christ is the principal subject of this Psalm, and it is interpreted of him, both by our Lord himself (Mt 21:16), and by his holy apostle (1Co 15:27; Heb 2:6-7).

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 1. Unable to express the glory of God, the Psalmist utters a note of exclamation. O Jehovah our Lord! We need not wonder at this, for no heart can measure, no tongue can utter, the half of the greatness of Jehovah. The whole creation is full of his glory and radiant with the excellency of his power; his goodness and his wisdom are manifested on every hand. The countless myriads of terrestrial beings, from man the head, to the creeping worm at the foot, are all supported and nourished by the Divine bounty. The solid fabric of the universe leans upon his eternal arm. Universally is he present, and everywhere is his name excellent. God worketh ever and everywhere. There is no *place* where God is not. The miracles of his power await us on all sides. Traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, rising like the battlements of heaven till you can see but a strip of the blue sky far overhead; you may be the only traveler who has passed through that glen; the bird may start up affrighted, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of human foot; but God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flowercups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean. where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. Mount to the highest heaven, or dive into the deepest hell, and God is in both hymned in everlasting song, or justified in terrible vengeance. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work. Nor on earth alone is Jehovah extolled, for his brightness shines forth in the firmament above the earth. His glory exceeds the glory of the starry heavens; above the region of the stars he hath set fast his everlasting throne, and there he dwells in light ineffable. Let us adore him "who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; who maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." (Job 9:8-9.) We can scarcely find more fitting words than those of Nehemiah, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." Returning to the text we are led to observe that this Psalm is addressed to God, because none but the Lord himself can fully know his own glory. The believing heart is ravished with what it sees, but God only knows the glory of God. What a sweetness lies in the little word *our,* how much is God's glory endeared to us when we consider our interest in him as our Lord.

How excellent is thy name! no words can express that excellency; and therefore it is left as a note of exclamation. The very name of Jehovah is excellent, what must his person be. Note the fact that even the heavens cannot contain his glory, it is set above the heavens, since it is and ever must be too great for the creature to express. When wandering among the Alps, we felt that the Lord was infinitely greater than all his grandest works, and under that feeling we roughly wrote these few lines:—

Yet in all these how great soe'er they be, We see not Him. The glass is all too dense And dark, or else our earthborn eyes too dim.

Yon Alps, that lift their heads above the clouds And hold familiar converse with the stars, Are dust, at which the balance trembleth not, Compared with His divine immensity. The snow-crown'd summits fail to set Him forth, Who dwelleth in Eternity, and bears Alone, the name of High and Lofty One. Depths unfathomed are too shallow to express The wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord. The mirror of the creatures has no space To bear the image of the Infinite. 'Tis true the Lord hath fairly writ his name, And set his seal upon creation's brow. But as the skilful potter much excels The vessel which he fashions on the wheel, E'en so, but in proportion greater far, Jehovah's self transcends his noblest works. Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap, If freighted with the load of Deity. Space is too narrow for the Eternal's rest, And time too short a footstool for his throne. E'en avalanche and thunder lack a voice, To utter the full volume of his praise. How then can I declare him? Where are words With which my glowing tongue may speak his name? Silent I bow, and humbly I adore.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** Gittith, was probably a musical instrument used at their rejoicings after the vintage. The vintage closed the civil year of the Jews, and this Psalm directs us to the latter-day glory, when the Lord shall be King over all the earth, having subdued all his enemies. It is very evident that the vintage was adopted as a figurative representation of the final destruction of all God's enemies. Is 63:1-6; Re 19:18-20. The ancient Jewish interpreters so understood this Psalm, and apply it to the mystic vintage. We may then consider this interesting composition as a prophetic anticipation of the kingdom of Christ, to be established in glory and honour in the "world to come," the habitable world. Heb 2:5. We see not yet all things put under his feet, but we are sure that the Word of God shall be fulfilled, and every enemy, Satan, death, and hell, shall be for ever subdued and destroyed, and creation itself delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Ro 8:17-23. In the use of this Psalm, then, we anticipate that victory, and in the praise we thus celebrate, we go on from strength to strength, till, with him who is our glorious Head, we appear in Zion before God. *W. Wilson, D.D., in loc.*

Whole Psalm. Now, consider but the scope of the Psalm, as the apostle quoteth it to prove the world to come. Heb 2:1-18. Any one that reads the Psalm would think that the psalmist doth but set forth old Adam in his kingdom, in his paradise, made a little lower than the angels—for we have spirits wrapped up in flesh and blood, whereas they are spirits simply—a degree lower, as if they were dukes, and we marquises; one would think, I say, that this were all his meaning, and that it is applied to Christ but by way of allusion. But the truth is, the apostle bringeth it in to prove and to convince these Hebrews, to whom he wrote, that that Psalm was meant of Christ, of that man whom they expected to be the Messiah, the Man Christ Jesus. And that he doth it, I prove by Ps 8:6—it is the observation that Beza hath—"One in a certain place," quoting David. diemarturato hath testified; so we may translate it, hath testified it, *etiam atque etiam,* testified most expressly; he bringeth an express proof for it that it was meant of the Man Christ Jesus; therefore it is not an allusion. And indeed it was Beza that did first begin that interpretation that I read of, and himself therefore doth excuse it and make an apology for it, that he diverteth out of the common road, though since many others have followed him. Now the scope of the Psalm is plainly this: in Ro 5:14, you read that Adam was a type of him that was to come. Now in Ps 8:1-9, you find there Adam's world, the type of a world to come; he was the first Adam, and had a world, so the second Adam hath a world also appointed for him; there is his oxen and his sheep, and the fowls of the air, whereby are meant other things, devils perhaps, and wicked men, the prince of the air; as by the heavens there; the angels, or the apostles, that were preachers of the gospel. To make this plain to you, that that Psalm where the phrase is used, "All things under his feet," and quoted by the apostle in Eph 1:22—therefore it is proper—was not meant of man in innocency, but of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, answerably, that the world there is not this world, but a world on purpose made for this Messiah, as the other was for Adam. First, it was not meant of man in innocency properly and principally. Why? Because in the first verse he saith, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." There were no babes in the time of Adam's innocency, he fell before there were any. Secondly, he addeth, "That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger;" the devil that is, for he shewed himself the enemy there, to be a manslayer from the beginning. God would use man to still him; alas! he overcame Adam presently. It must be meant of another therefore, one that is able to still this enemy and avenger. Then he saith, "How excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." Adam had but paradise, he never propagated God's name over all the earth; he did not continue so long before he fell as to beget sons; much less did he found it in the heavens. Again, Ps 8:4, "What is man, and the son of man?" Adam, though he was man, yet he was not the son of man; he is called indeed, "the son of God" (Lu 3:38), but he was not *filius hominis.* I remember Ribera urgeth that. But take an argument the apostle himself useth to prove it. This man, saith he, must have all subject to him; all but God, saith he; he must have the angels subject to him, for he hath put all principalities and powers under his feet, saith he. This could not be Adam, is could not be the man that had this world in a state of innocency; much less had Adam all under his feet. No, my brethren, it was too great a vassalage for Adam to have the creatures thus bow to him. But they are thus to Jesus Christ, angels and all; they are all under his feet, he is far above them.

Secondly, it is not meant of man fallen, that is as plain; the apostle himself saith so. "We see not," saith he, "all things subject unto him." Some think that it is meant as an objection that the apostle answereth; but it is indeed to prove that man fallen cannot be meant in Ps 8:1-9. Why? Because, saith he, we do not see anything, all things at least, subject unto him; you have not any one man, or the whole race of man, to whom all things have been subject; the creatures are sometimes injurious to him. We do not see him, saith he, that is, the nature of man in general considered. Take all the monarchs in the world, they never conquered the whole world; there was never any one man that was a sinner that had all subject to him. "But we see," saith he—mark the opposition—"but we see Jesus," that Man, "crowned with glory and honour;" therefore it is this Man, and no man else; the opposition implieth it." ... So now it remaineth, then, that it is only Christ, God-man, that is meant in Ps 8:1-9. And indeed, and in truth, Christ himself interpreteth the Psalm of himself; you have two witnesses to confirm it, Christ himself and the apostle. Mt 21:16. When they cried hosanna to Christ, or "save now," and made him Saviour of the world, the Pharisees were angry, our Saviour confuteth them by this very Psalm: "Have ye not read," saith he, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" He quoteth this very Psalm which speaks of himself; and Paul, by his warrant, and perhaps from that hint, doth thus argue out of it, and convince the Jews by it. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Ver. 1.** How excellent is thy name in all the earth! How illustrious is the name of Jesus throughout the world! His incarnation, birth, humble and obscure life, preaching, miracles, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, are celebrated through the whole world. His religion, the gifts and graces of his Spirit, his people— Christians, his gospel, and the preachers of it, are everywhere spoken of. No name is so universal, no power and influence so generally felt, as those of the Saviour of mankind. Amen. *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 1.** Above the heavens; not in the heavens, but above the heavens; even greater, beyond, and higher than they; "angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him." As Paul says, he hath "ascended up far above all heavens." And with this his glory above the heavens is connected, his sending forth his name upon earth through his Holy Spirit. As the apostle adds in this passage, "He hath ascended up far above all heavens; and he gave some apostles." And thus here: "Thy name excellent in all the world;" "Thy glory above the heavens." *Isaac Williams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 1.

O Lord, our Lord. Personal appropriation of the Lord as ours. The privilege of holding such a portion.

How excellent, etc. The excellence of the name and nature of God in all places, and under all circumstances. Sermon or lecture upon the glory of God in creation and providence.

In all the earth. The universal revelation of God in nature and its excellency.

Thy glory above the heavens. The incomprehensible and infinite glory of God.

Above the heavens. The glory of God outsoaring the intellect of angels, and the splendour of heaven.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** Nor only in the heavens above is the Lord seen, but the earth beneath is telling forth his majesty. In the sky, the massive orbs, rolling in their stupendous grandeur, are witnesses of his power in great things, while here below, the lisping utterances of babes are the manifestations of his strength in little ones. How often will children tell us of a God whom we have forgotten! How doth their simple prattle refute those learned fools who deny the being of God! Many men have been made to hold their tongues, while sucklings have borne witness to the glory of the God of heaven. It is singular how clearly the history of the church expounds this verse. Did not the children cry "Hosannah!" in the temple, when proud Pharisees were silent and contemptuous? and did not the Saviour quote these very words as a justification of their infantile cries? Early church history records many amazing instances of the testimony of children for the truth of God, but perhaps more modern instances will be the most interesting. Fox tells us, in the Book of Martyrs, that when Mr. Lawrence was burnt in Colchester, he was carried to the fire in a chair, because through the cruelty of the Papists, he could not stand upright, several young children came about the fire, and cried as well as they could speak, "Lord, strengthen thy servant, and keep thy promise." God answered their prayer, for Mr. Lawrence died as firmly and calmly as any one could wish to breathe his last. When one of the Popish chaplains told Mr. Wishart, the great Scotch martyr, that he had a devil in him, a child that stood by cried out, "A devil cannot speak such words as yonder man speaketh." One more instance is still nearer to our time. In a postscript to one of his letters, in which he details his persecution when first preaching in Moorfields, Whitfield says, "I cannot help adding that several little boys and girls, who were fond of sitting round me on the pulpit while I preached, and handed to me people's notes— though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt, &c., thrown at me—never once gave way; but on the contrary, every time I was struck, turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me. God make them, in their growing years, great and living martyrs for him who, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, perfects praise!" He who delights in the songs of angels is pleased to honour himself in the eyes of his enemies by the praises of little children. What a contrast between the glory above the heavens, and the mouths of babes and sucklings! yet by both the name of God is made excellent.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 2.** Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, etc. In a prophetical manner, speaking of that which was to be done by children many hundreds of years after, for the asserting of his infinite mercy in sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sins. For so the Lord applieth their crying, "Hosannah to the Son of David" in the temple. And thus both Basil and other ancients, and some new writers also understand it. But Calvin will have it meant of God's wonderful providing for them, by turning their mother's blood into milk, and giving them the faculty to suck, thus nourishing and preserving them, which sufficiently convinceth all gainsayers of God's wonderful providence toward the weakest and shiftless of all creatures. *John Mayer,* 1653.

Ver. 2. Who are these babes and sucklings?

1. Man in general, who springeth from so weak and poor a beginning as that of babes and sucklings, yet is at length advanced to such power as to grapple with, and overcome the enemy and the avenger.

2. David in particular, who being but a ruddy youth, God used him as an instrument to discomfit Goliath of Gath.

3. More especially our Lord Jesus Christ, who assuming our nature and all the sinless infirmities of it, and submitting to the weakness of an infant, and after dying is gone in the same nature to reign in heaven, till he hath brought all his enemies under his feet. Ps 110:1 and 1Co 15:27. Then was our human nature exalted above all other creatures, when the Son of God was made of a woman, carried in the womb.

4. The apostles, who to outward appearance were despicable, in a manner children and sucklings in comparison of the great ones of the world; poor despised creatures, yet principal instruments of God's service and glory. Therefore 'tis notable, that when Christ glorifieth his Father for the wise and free dispensation of his saving grace (Mt 11:25), he saith, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," so called from the meanness of their condition... And you shall see it was spoken when the disciples were sent abroad and had power given them over unclean spirits. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." This he acknowledged to be an act of infinite condescension in God.

5. Those children that cried *Hosannah* to Christ, make up part of the sense, for Christ defendeth their practise by this Scripture...

6. Not only the apostles, but all those that fight under Christ's banner, and are listed into his confederacy, may be called babes and sucklings; first, because of their condition; secondly, their disposition...

1. Because of their condition... God in the government of the world is pleased to subdue the enemies of his kingdom by weak and despised instruments.

2. Because of their disposition: they are most humbly spirited. We are told (Mt 18:3), "Except ye be converted and become as little children," etc. As if he had said, you strive for pre-eminence and worldly greatness in my kingdom; I tell you my kingdom is a kingdom of babes, and containeth none but the humble, and such as are little in their own eyes, and are contented to be small and despised in the eyes of others, and so do not seek after great matters in the world. A young child knoweth not what striving or state meaneth, and therefore by an emblem and visible representation of a child set in the midst of them, Christ would take them off from the expectation of a carnal kingdom.

*Thomas Manton,* 1620-1677.

**Ver. 2.** That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. This very confusion and revenge upon Satan, who was the cause of man's fall, was aimed at by God at first; therefore is the first promise and preaching of the gospel to Adam brought in rather in sentencing him than in speaking to Adam, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, it being in God's aim as much to confound him as to save poor man. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Ver. 2.** The work that is done in love loses half its tedium and difficulty. It is as with a stone, which in the air and on the dry ground we strain at but cannot stir. Flood the field where it lies, bury the block beneath the rising water; and now, when its head is submerged, bend to the work. Put your strength to it. Ah! it moves, rises from its bed, rolls on before your arm. So, when under the heavenly influences of grace the tide of love rises, and goes swelling over our duties and difficulties, a child can do a man's work, and a man can do a giant's. Let love be present in the heart, and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God ordaineth strength." *Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

**Ver. 2.** Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, etc. That poor martyr, Alice Driver, in the presence of many hundreds, did so silence Popish bishops, that she and all blessed God that the proudest of them could not resist the spirit in a silly woman; so I say to thee, *"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings"* God will be honoured. Even thou, silly worm, shalt honour him, when it shall appear what God hath done for thee, what lusts he hath mortified, and what graces he hath granted thee. The Lord can yet do greater things for thee if thou wilt trust him. He can carry thee upon eagles' wings, enable thee to bear and suffer strong affliction for him, to persevere to the end, to live by faith, and to finish thy course with joy. Oh! in that he hath made thee low in heart, thy other lowness shall be so much the more honour to thee. Do not all as much and more wonder at God's rare workmanship in the ant, the poorest bug that creeps, as in the biggest elephant? That so many parts and limbs should be united in such a little space; that so poor a creature should provide in the summer-time her winter's food? Who sees not as much of God in a bee as in a greater creature? Alas! in a great body we look for great abilities and wonder not. Therefore, to conclude, seeing God hath clothed the uncomely parts with the more honour, bless God, and bear thy baseness more equally; thy greatest glory is yet to come, that when the wise of the world have rejected the counsel of God, thou hast (with those poor publicans and soldiers), magnified the ministry of the gospel. Surely the Lord will also be admired in thee (1Th 1:1-10), a poor silly creature, that even thou wert made wise to salvation and believest in that day. Be still poor in thine own eyes, and the Lord will make thy proudest scornful enemies to worship at thy feet, to confess God hath done much for thee, and wish thy portion when God shall visit them. *Daniel Rogers,* 1642.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2.** Infant piety, its possibility, potency, strength, and influence, that thou mightest still, etc.

The strength of the gospel not the result of eloquence or wisdom in the speaker.

Great results from small causes when the Lord ordains to work. Great things which can be said and claimed by babes in grace. The stilling of the powers of evil by the testimony of feeble believers. The stilling of the Great Enemy by the conquests of grace.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 3-4. At the close of that excellent little manual entitled "The Solar System", written by Dr. Dick, we find an eloquent passage which beautifully expounds the text:—A survey of the solar system has a tendency to moderate the pride of man and to promote humility. Pride is one of the distinguishing characteristics of puny man, and has been one of the chief causes of all the contentions, wars, devastations, systems of slavery, and ambitious projects which have desolated and demoralized our sinful world. Yet there is no disposition more incongruous to the character and circumstances of man. Perhaps there are no rational beings throughout the universe among whom pride would appear more unseemly or incompatible than in man, considering the situation in which he is placed. He is exposed to numerous degradations and calamities, to the rage of storms and tempests, the devastations of earthquakes and volcanoes, the fury of whirlwinds, and the tempestuous billows of the ocean, to the ravages of the sword, famine, pestilence, and numerous diseases; and at length he must sink into the grave, and his body must become the companion of worms! The most dignified and haughty of the sons of men are liable to these and similar degradations as well as the meanest of the human family. Yet, in such circumstances, man—that puny worm of the dust, whose knowledge is so limited, and whose follies are so numerous and glaring—has the effrontery to strut in all the haughtiness of pride, and to glory in his shame. When other arguments and motives produce little effect on certain minds, no considerations seem likely to have a more powerful tendency to counteract this deplorable propensity in human beings, than those which are borrowed from the objects connected with astronomy. They show us what an insignificant being—what a mere atom, indeed, man appears amidst the immensity of creation! Though he is an object of the paternal care and mercy of the Most High, yet he is but as a grain of sand to the whole earth, when compared to the countless myriads of beings that people the amplitudes of creation. What is the whole of this globe on which we dwell compared with the solar system, which contains a mass of matter ten thousand times greater? What is it in comparison of the hundred millions of suns and worlds which by the telescope have been descried throughout the starry regions? What, then, is a kingdom, a province, or a baronial territory, of which we are as proud as if we were the lords of the universe and for which we engage in so much devastation and carnage? What are they, when set in competition with the glories of the sky? Could we take our station on the lofty pinnacles of heaven, and look down on this scarcely distinguishable speck of earth, we should be ready to exclaim with Seneca, "Is it to this little spot that the great designs and vast desires of men are confined? Is it for this there is so much disturbance of nations, so much carnage, and so many ruinous wars? Oh, the folly of deceived men, to imagine great kingdoms in the compass of an atom, to raise armies to decide a point of earth with the sword!" Dr. Chalmers, in his Astronomical Discourses, very truthfully says, "We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer though the globe we tread upon, `and all that it inherits, should dissolve.'"

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3.** When I consider. Meditation fits for humiliation. When David had been contemplating the works of creation, their splendour, harmony, motion, influence, he lets the plumes of pride fall, and begins to have self-abasing thoughts. *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 3.** When I consider thy heavens, etc. David surveying the firmament, broke forth into this consideration: *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast created, what is man?"* etc. How cometh he to mention the moon and stars, and omit the sun? the other being but his pensioners, shining with that exhibition of light which the bounty of the sun allots them. It is answered, this was David's night meditation, when the sun, departing to the other world, left the lesser lights only visible in heaven; and as the sky is best surveyed by night in the variety of the same. Night was made for man to rest in. But when I cannot sleep, may I, with the psalmist, entertain my waking with good thoughts. Not to use them as opium, to invite my corrupt nature to slumber, but to bolt out bad thoughts, which otherwise would possess my soul. *Thomas Fuller,* 1608-1661.

**Ver. 3.** *"Thy heavens."* The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things, his word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees him in everything, even in natural things, in looking on the heavens and the earth and all the creatures—"THY heavens;" sees all in that notion, in their relation to God as his work, and in them his glory appearing; stands in awe, fearing to abuse his creatures and his favours to his dishonour. *"The day is thine, and the night also is thine;"* therefore ought not I to forget thee through the day, nor in the night. *Robert Leighton, D.D.*

**Ver. 3.** The stars. I cannot say that it is chiefly the contemplation of their infinitude, and the immeasurable space they occupy, that enraptures me in the stars. These conditions rather tend to confuse the mind; and in this view of countless numbers and unlimited space there lies, moreover, much that belongs rather to a temporary and human than to an eternally abiding consideration. Still less do I regard them absolutely with reference to the life after this. But the mere thought they are so far beyond and above everything terrestrial—the feeling, that before them everything earthly so utterly vanishes to nothing—that the single man is so infinitely insignificant in the comparison with these worlds strewn over all space—that his destinies, his enjoyments, and sacrifices, to which he attaches such a minute importance—how all these fade like nothing before such immense objects; then, that the constellations bind together all the races of man, and all the eras of earth, that they have beheld all that has passed since the beginning of time, and will see all that passes until its end; in thoughts like these I can always lose myself with a silent delight in the view of the starry firmament. It is, in very truth, a spectacle of the highest solemnity, when, in the stillness of night, in a heaven quite clear, the stars, like a choir of worlds, arise and descend, while existence, as it were, falls asunder into two separate parts; the one, belonging to earth, grows dumb in the utter silence of night, and thereupon the other mounts upward in all its elevation, splendour, and majesty. And, when contemplated from this point of view, the starry heavens have truly a moral influence on the mind. *Alexander Von Humboldt,* 1850.

**Ver. 3.** When I consider thy heavens, etc. Could we transport ourselves above the moon, could we reach the highest star above our heads, we should instantly discover new skies, new stars, new suns, new systems, and perhaps more magnificently adorned. But even there, the vast dominions of our great Creator would not terminate; we should then find, to our astonishment, that we had only arrived at the borders of the works of God. It is but little that we can know of his works, but that little should teach us to be humble, and to admire the divine power and goodness. How great must that Being be who produced these immense globes out of nothing, who regulates their courses, and whose mighty hand directs and supports them all! What is the clod of earth which we inhabit, with all the magnificent scenes it presents to us, in comparison of those innumerable worlds? Were this earth annihilated, its absence would no more be observed than that of a grain of sand from the sea shore. What then are provinces and kingdoms when compared with those worlds? They are but atoms dancing in the air, which are discovered to us by the sunbeams. What then am I, when reckoned among the infinite number of God's creatures? I am lost in mine own nothingness! But little as I appear in this respect, I find myself great in others. There is great beauty in this starry firmament which God has chosen for his throne! How admirable are those celestial bodies! I am dazzled with their splendour, and enchanted with their beauty! But notwithstanding this, however beautiful, and however richly adorned, yet this sky is void of intelligence. It is a stranger to its own beauty, while I, who am mere clay, moulded by a divine hand, am endowed with sense and reason. I can contemplate the beauty of these shining worlds; nay, more, I am already, to a certain degree, acquainted with their sublime Author; and by faith I see some small rays of his divine glory. O may I be more and more acquainted with his works, and make the study of them my employ, till by a glorious change I rise to dwell with him above the starry regions. *Christopher Christian Sturm's "Reflections",* 1750-1786.

**Ver. 3.** Work of God's fingers. That is most elaborate and accurate: a metaphor from embroiderers, or from them that make tapestry. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 3.** When I consider thy heavens, etc. It is truly a most Christian exercise to extract a sentiment of piety from the works and the appearance of nature. It has the authority of the sacred writers upon its side, and even our Saviour himself gives it the weight and the solemnity of his example. "Behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them." He expatiates on the beauty of a single flower, and draws from it the delightful argument of confidence in God. He gives us to see that taste may be combined with piety, and that the same heart may be occupied with all that is serious in the contemplation of religion, and be at the same time alive to the charms and the loveliness of nature. The psalmist takes a still loftier flight. He leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expanse which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space, and wanders in thought over its immeasurable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude, he sees it crowded with splendour, and filled with the energy of the divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the granduer and the variety which are on every side of him; and, passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest deign to visit him?" It is not for us to say whether inspiration revealed to the psalmist the wonders of modern astronomy. But, even though the mind be a perfect stranger to the science of these enlightened times, the heavens present a great and an elevating spectacle, an immense concave reposing upon the circular boundary of the world, and the innumerable lights which are suspended from on high, moving with solemn regularity along its surface. It seems to have been at night that the piety of the psalmist was awakened by this contemplation; when the moon and the stars were visible, and not when the sun had risen in his strength and thrown a splendour around him, which bore down and eclipsed all the lesser glories of the firmament. *Thomas Chalmers, D.D.,* 1817.

Ver. 3. Thy heavens:

This prospect vast, what is it? — weigh'd aright, 'Tis natures system of divinity, And every student of the night inspires. 'Tis elder Scripture, writ by God's own hand: Scripture authentic! uncorrupt by man.

*Edward Young.*

**Ver. 3.** The stars. When I gazed into these stars, have they not looked down on me as if with pity from their serene spaces, like eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man! *Thomas Carlyle.*

Ver. 3-4. When I consider the heavens, etc. Draw spiritual inferences from occasional objects. David did but wisely consider the heavens, and he breaks out into self-abasement and humble admiration of God. Glean matter of instruction to yourselves, and praise to your Maker from everything you see; it will be a degree of restoration to a state of innocency, since this was Adam's task in paradise. Dwell not upon any created object only as a *virtuoso,* to gratify your rational curiosity, but as a Christian, call religion to the feast, and make a spiritual improvement. No creature can meet our eyes but affords us lessons worthy of our thoughts, besides the general notices of the power and wisdom of the Creator. Thus may the sheep read us a lesson of patience, the dove of innocence, the ant and bee raise blushes in us for our sluggishness, and the stupid ox and dull ass correct and shame our ungrateful ignorance... He whose eyes are open cannot want an instructor, unless he wants a heart. *Stephen Charnock.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER None.

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

Ver. 3-4. When I consider the heavens, etc. Draw spiritual inferences from occasional objects. David did but wisely consider the heavens, and he breaks out into self-abasement and humble admiration of God. Glean matter of instruction to yourselves, and praise to your Maker from everything you see; it will be a degree of restoration to a state of innocency, since this was Adam's task in paradise. Dwell not upon any created object only as a *virtuoso,* to gratify your rational curiosity, but as a Christian, call religion to the feast, and make a spiritual improvement. No creature can meet our eyes but affords us lessons worthy of our thoughts, besides the general notices of the power and wisdom of the Creator. Thus may the sheep read us a lesson of patience, the dove of innocence, the ant and bee raise blushes in us for our sluggishness, and the stupid ox and dull ass correct and shame our ungrateful ignorance ... He whose eyes are open cannot want an instructor, unless he wants a heart. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 4.** What is man that thou art mindful of him? etc. My readers must be careful to mark the design of the psalmist, which is to enhance, by this comparison, the infinite goodness of God; for it is, indeed, a wonderful thing that the Creator of heaven, whose glory is so surpassingly great as to ravish us with the highest admiration, condescends so far as graciously to take upon him the care of the human race. That the psalmist makes this contrast must be inferred from the Hebrew word (fwna) *enosh,* which we have rendered *man,* and which expresses the frailty of man rather than any strength or power which he possesses ... Almost all interpreters render (dqp), *pakad,* the last word of this verse, *to visit;* and I am unwilling to differ from them, since t and as we will often find in the Psalms the repetition of the same thought in different words, it may here be very properly translated to remember; as if David had said, "This is a marvelous thing, that God thinks upon men, and remembers them continually." *John Calvin,* 1509-1564.

**Ver. 4.** What is man? But, O God, what a little lord hast thou made over this great world! The least corn of sand is not so small to the whole earth, as man is to the heaven. When I see the heavens, the sun, the moon, and stars, O God, what is man? Who would think that thou shouldest make all these creatures for one, and that one well-near the least of all? Yet none but he can see what thou hast done; none but he can admire and adore thee in what he seeth: how had he need to do nothing but this, since he alone must do it! Certainly the price and value of things consist not in the quantity; one diamond is worth more than many quarries of stone; one lodestone hath more virtue than mountains of earth. It is lawful for us to praise thee in ourselves. All thy creation hath not more wonder in it than one of us: other creatures thou madest by a simple command; MAN, not without a divine consultation: others at once; man thou didst form, then inspire: others in several shapes, like to none but themselves; man, after thine own image: others with qualities fit for service; man, for dominion. Man had his name from thee; they had their names from man. How should we be consecrated to thee above all others, since thou hast bestowed more cost on us than other! *Joseph Hall, D.D., Bishop of Norwich,* 1574-1656.

**Ver. 4.** What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him? And (Job 7:17-18) "What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning?" Man, in the pride of his heart, seeth no such great matter in it; but a humble soul is filled with astonishment. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa 57:15. Oh, saith the humble soul, will the Lord have respect unto such a vile worm as I am? Will the Lord acquaint himself with such a sinful wretch as I am? Will the Lord open his arms, his bosom, his heart to me? Shall such a loathsome creature as I find favour in his eyes? In Eze 16:1-5, we have a relation of the wonderful condescension of God to man, who is there resembled to a wretched infant cast out in the day of its birth, in its blood and filthiness, no eye pitying it; such loathsome creatures are we before God; and yet when he passed by, and saw us polluted in our blood, he said unto us, "Live." It is doubled because of the strength of its nature; it was "the time of love" (Eze 16:8). This was love indeed, that God should take a filthy, wretched thing, and spread his skirts over it, and cover its nakedness and swear unto it, and enter into a covenant with it, and make it his: that is, that he should espouse this loathsome thing to himself, that he would be a husband to it; this is love unfathomable, love inconceivable, self-principle love; this is the love of God to man, for God is love. Oh, the depth of the riches of the bounty and goodness of God! How is his love wonderful, and his grace past finding out! How do you find and feel your hearts affected upon the report of these things? Do you not see matter of admiration and cause of wonder? Are you not as it were launched forth into an ocean of goodness, where you can see no shore, nor feel no bottom? Ye may make a judgment of yourselves by the motions and affections that ye feel in yourselves at the mention of this. For thus Christ judged of the faith of the centurion that said unto him, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Mt 8:8-10. If, then, you feel not your souls mightily affected with this condescension of God, say thus unto your souls, What aileth thee, O my soul, that thou art no more affected with the goodness of God? Art thou dead, that thou canst not feel? Or art thou blind, that thou canst not see thyself compassed about with astonishing goodness? Behold the King of glory descending from the habitation of his majesty, and coming to visit thee! Hearest not thou his voice, saying, "Open to me, my sister: behold, I stand at the door and knock. Lift up yourselves, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in"? Behold, O my soul, how he waits still, while thou hast refused to open to him! Oh, the wonder of his goodness! Oh, the condescension of his love, to visit me, to sue unto me, to wait upon me, to be acquianted with me! Thus work up your souls into an astonishment at the condescension of God. *James Janeway,* 1674.

**Ver. 4.** Man in Hebrew—infirm or miserable man—by which it is apparent that he speaks of man not according to the state of his creation, but as fallen into a state of sin, and misery, and mortality. *Art mindful of him, i.e.,* carest for him, and conferrest such high favours upon him. *The son of man,* Hebrew, *the son of Adam,* that great apostate from and rebel against God; the sinful son of a sinlful father—his son by likeness of disposition and manners, no less than by procreation; all which tends to magnify the divine mercy. *That thou visitest, him*—not in anger, as that word is sometimes used, but with thy grace and mercy, as it is taken in Ge 21:1; Ex 4:31; Ps 65:9; 106:4; 144:3.

**Ver. 4.** What is man? The Scripture gives many answers to this question. Ask the prophet Isaiah, *"What is man?"* and he answers (Isa 40:6), man is "grass"—"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." Ask David, *"What is man?"* He answers (Ps 62:9), man is *"a lie,"* not a liar only, or a deceiver, but *"a lie,"* and a deceit. All the answers the Holy Ghost gives concerning man, are to humble man: man is ready to flatter himself, and one man to flatter another, but God tells us plainly what we are ... It is a wonder that God should vouchsafe a gracious look upon such a creature as man; it is wonderful, considering the distance between God and man, as man is a creature and God the creator. *"What is man,"* that God should take notice of him? Is he not a clod of earth, a piece of clay? But consider him as a sinful and an unclean creature, and we may wonder to amazement: what is an unclean creature that God should magnify him? Will the Lord indeed put value on filthiness, and fix his approving eye upon an impure thing? One step further; what is rebellious man, man an enemy to God, that God should magnify him! what admiration can answer this question? Will God prefer his enemies, and magnify those who would cast him down? Will a prince exalt a traitor, or give him honour who attempts to take away his life? The sinful nature of man is an enemy to the nature of God, and would pull God out of heaven; yet God even at that time is raising man to heaven: sin would lessen the great God, and yet God greatens sinful man. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 4.** What is man? Oh, the granduer and littleness, the excellence and the corruption, the majesty and meanness of man! *Pascal,* 1623-1662.

**Ver. 4.** Thou visitest him. To visit is, first, to afflict, to chasten, yea, to punish; the highest judgments in Scripture come under the notions of visitations. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (Ex 34:7), that is, punishing them ... And it is a common speech with us when a house hath the plague, which is one of the highest strokes of temporal affliction, we used to say, "Such a house is visited." Observe then, afflictions are visitations ... Secondly, to visit, in a good sense, signifies to show mercy, and to refresh, to deliver and to bless; "Naomi heard how the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." Ru 1:6. "The Lord visited Sarah," etc. Ge 21:1-2. That greatest mercy and deliverance that ever the children of men had, is thus expressed, "The Lord hath visited and redeemed his people." Lu 1:68. Mercies are visitations; when God comes in kindness and love to do us good, he visiteth us. And these mercies are called visitations in two respects: 1. Because *God comes near to us* when he doth us good; mercy is a drawing near to a soul, a drawing near to a place. As when God sends a judgment, or afflicts, he is said to depart and go away from that place; so when he doth us good, he comes near, and as it were applies himself in favour to our persons and habitations. 2. They are called a visitation because of *the freeness of them.* A visit is one of the freest things in the world; there is no obligation but that of love to make a visit; because such a man is my friend and I love him, therefore I visit him. Hence that greatest act of free grace in redeeming the world is called a visitation, because it was as freely done as ever any friend made a visit to see his friend, and with infinite more freedom. There was no obligation on man's side at all, many unkindnesses and neglects there were; God in love came to redeem man. Thirdly, to visit imports an act of care and inspection, of tutorage and direction. The pastor's office over the flock is expressed by this act (Zec 10:3; Ac 15:36); and the care we ought to have of the fatherless and widows is expressed by visiting them. "Pure religion," saith the apostle James, "Is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (Ac 1:27); and in Mt 25:34, Christ pronounceth the blessing on them who, when he was in prison, visited him, which was not a bare seeing, or asking `how do you,' but it was care of Christ in his imprisonment, and helpfulness and provision for him in his afflicted members. That sense also agrees well with this place, Job 7:17-18, *"What is man, that thou shouldst visit him?" Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 4.** What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visiteth him?

Lord, what is man that thou So mindful art of him? Or what's the son Of man, that thou the highest heaven didst bow, And to his aide didst runne?

Man's but a piece of clay That's animated by thy heavenly breath, And when that breath thou tak'st away,  
Hee's clay again by death.  
He is not worthy of the least  
Of all Thy mercies at the best.

Baser than clay is he, For sin hath made him like the beasts that perish, Though next the angels he was in degree;  
Yet this beast thou dost cherish.  
Hee is not worthy of the least,  
Of all thy mercies, hee's a beast.

Worse than a beast is man, Who after thine own image made at first, Became the divel's sonne by sin. And can  
A thing be more accurst?  
Yet thou thy greatest mercy hast  
On this accursed creature cast.

Thou didst thyself abase, And put off all thy robes of majesty, Taking his nature to give him thy grace, To save his life didst dye. He is not worthy of the least Of all thy mercies; one's a feast.

Lo! man is made now even With the blest angels, yea, superiour farre, Since Christ sat down at God's right hand in heaven,  
And God and man one are. Thus all thy mercies man inherits, Though not the least of them he merits.

*Thomas Washbourne, D.D.,* 1654.

**Ver. 4.** What is man?

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, How complicate, how wonderful is man! How passing wonder HE who made him such! Who centred in our make such strange extremes! From different natures marvelously mix'd, Connexion exquisite of distant worlds! Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain! Midway from nothing to the Deity! A beam ethereal, sullied and absorb'd, Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine! Dim miniature of greatness absolute! An heir of glory! a frail child of dust! *Helpless* immortal! insect *infinite!* A worm! a god! I tremble at myself, And in myself am lost.

*Edward Young,* 1681-1775.

(Ver. 4-8)—What is man, etc.:

—-Man is ev'ry thing, And more: he is a tree, yet bears no fruit; A beast, yet is, or should be more: Reason and speech we onely bring. Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,  
They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetrie, Full of proportions, one limbe to another,  
And all to all the world besides:  
Each part may call the farthest, brother. For head with foot hath private amitie,  
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so farre, But man hath caught and kept it, as his prey. His eyes dismount the highest starre: He is in little all the sphere. Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
Finde their acquaintance there.

For us the windes do blow; The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow. Nothing we see, but means our good, As our *delight,* or as our *treasure:* The whole is, either our cupboard of *food,* Or cabinet of *pleasure.*

The starres have us to bed: Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:

Musick and light attend our head.  
All things unto our *flesh* are kinde In their *descent* and *being;* to our *minde*In their *ascent* and *cause.*

Each thing is full of dutie: Waters united are our navigation; Distinguished, our habitation; Below, our drink; above, our meat: Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie?  
Then how are all things neat!

More servants wait on man, Than he'l take notice of: in ev'ry path  
He treads down that which doth befriend him,  
When sicknesse makes him pale and wan, Oh, mightie love! Man is one world, and hath  
Another to attend him.

*George Herbert,* 1593.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 4. Man's insignificance. God's mindfulness of man. Divine visits. The question, "What is man?" Each of these themes may suffice for a discourse, or they may be handled in one sermon.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 5-8. These verses may set forth man's position among the creatures before he fell; but as they are, by the apostle Paul, appropriated to man as represented by the Lord Jesus, it is best to give most weight to that meaning. In order of dignity, man stood next to the angels, and a little lower than they; in the Lord Jesus this was accomplished, for he was made a little lower than the angels by the suffering of death. Man in Eden had the full command of all creatures, and they came before him to receive their names as an act of homage to him as the viceregent of God to them. Jesus in his glory, is now Lord, not only of all living, but of all created things, and, with the exception of him who put all things under him, Jesus is Lord of all, and his elect, in him, are raised to a dominion wider than that of the first Adam, as shall be more clearly seen at his coming. Well might the Psalmist wonder at the singular exaltation of man in the scale of being, when he marked his utter nothingness in comparison with the starry universe.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

(Ver. 4-8.)—What is man, etc.:

—-Man is ev'ry thing, And more: he is a tree, yet bears no fruit; A beast, yet is, or should be more: Reason and speech we onely bring. Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,  
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And all to all the world besides:  
Each part may call the farthest, brother. For head with foot hath private amitie,  
And both with moons and tides.  
Nothing hath got so farre, But man hath caught and kept it, as his prey. His eyes dismount the highest starre: He is in little all the sphere. Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
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For us the windes do blow; The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow. Nothing we see,  
but means of good, As our *delight* or as our *treasure:* The whole is, either our cupboard of *food,*Or cabinet of *pleasure.*

The starres have us to bed: Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:  
Musick and light attend our head.  
All things unto our *flesh* are kinde In their *descent* and *being;* to our *minde*In their *ascent* and *cause.*

Each thing is full of dutie: Waters united are our navigation; Distinguished, our habitation; Below, our drink; above, our meat: Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie?  
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*George Herbert,* 1593.

**Ver. 5.** Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels. Perhaps it was not so much in nature as in position that man, as first formed, was inferior to the angels. At all events, we can be sure that nothing higher could be affirmed of the angels, than that they were made in the image of God. If, then, they had originally superiority over man, it must have been in the degree of resemblance. The angel was made immortal, intellectual, holy, powerful, glorious, and in these properties lay their likeness to the Creator. But were not these properties given also to man? Was not man made immortal, intellectual, holy, powerful, glorious? And if the angel excelled the man, it was not, we may believe, in the possession of properties which had no counterpart in the man; both bore God's image, and both therefore had lineaments of the attributes which centre in Deity. Whether or not these lineaments were more strongly marked in the angels than in man, it were presumptuous to attempt to decide; but it is sufficient for our present purpose that the same properties must have been common to both, since both were modelled after the same divine image; and whatever originally the relative positions of the angel and the man, we cannot question that since the fall man had been fearfully inferior to the angels. The effect of transgression has been to debase all his powers, and so bring him down from his high rank in the scale of creation; but, however degraded and sunken, he still retains the capacities of his original formation, and since these capacities could have differed in nothing but degree from the capacities of the angel, it must be clear that they may be so purged and enlarged as to produce, if we may not say to restore, the equality ... Oh! it may be, we again say, that an erroneous estimate is formed, when we separate by an immense space the angel and the man, and bring down the human race to a low station in the scale of creation. If I search through the records of science, I may indeed find that, for the furtherance of magnificent purposes, God hath made man "a little lower than the angels;" and I cannot close my eyes to the melancholy fact, that as a consequence upon apostasy there has been a weakening and a rifling of those splendid endowments which Adam might have transmitted unimpaired to his children. And yet the Bible teems with notices, that so far from being by nature higher than men, angels even now possess not an importance which belongs to our race. It is a mysterious thing, and one to which we scarcely dare allude, that there has arisen a Redeemer of fallen men, but not of fallen angels. We would build no theory on so awful and inscrutable a truth; but is it too much to say, that the interference on the behalf of man and the non-interference on the behalf of angels, gives ground for the persuasion, that men occupy at least not a lower place than angels in the love and the solicitude of their Maker? Beside, are not angels represented as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?" And what is the idea conveyed by such a representation, if it be not that believers, being attended and waited on by angels, are as children of God marching forwards to a splendid throne, and so elevated amongst creatures, that those who have the wind in their wings, and are brilliant as a flame of fire, delight to do them honour? And, moreover, does not the repentance of a single sinner minister gladness to a whole throng of angels? And who shall say that this sending of a new wave of rapture throughout the hierarchy of heaven does not betoken such immense sympathy with men as goes far towards proving him the occupant of an immense space in the scale of existence? We may add, also, that angels learn of men; inasmuch as Paul declares to the Ephesians, that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." And when we further remember, that in one of those august visions with which the Evangelist John was favoured, he beheld the representatives of the church placed immediately before the eternal throne, whilst angels, standing at a greater distance, thronged the outer circle, we seem to have accumulated proof that men are not to be considered as naturally inferior to angels—that however they may have cast themselves down from eminence, and sullied the lustre and sapped the strength of their first estate, they are still capable of the very loftiest elevation, and require nothing but the being restored to their forfeited position, and the obtaining room for the development of their powers, in order to their shining forth as the illustrious ones of the creation, the breathing, burning images of the Godhead ... The Redeemer is represented as submitting to be humbled—"made a little lower than the angels," for the sake or with a view to the glory that was to be the recompense of his sufferings. This is a very important representation— one that should be most attentively considered; and from it may be drawn, we think, a strong and clear argument for the divinity of Christ.

We could never see how it could be humility in any creature, whatever the dignity of his condition, to assume the office of a Mediator and to work out our reconciliation. We do not forget to how extreme degradation a Mediator must consent to be reduced, and through what suffering and ignominy he could alone achieve our redemption; but neither do we forget the unmeasured exaltation which was to be the Mediator's reward, and which, if Scripture be true, was to make him far higher than the highest of principalities and powers; and we know not where would have been the amazing humility, where the unparalleled condescension, had any mere creature consented to take the office on the prospect of such a recompense. A being who knew that he should be immeasurably elevated if he did a certain thing, can hardly be commended for the greatness of his humility in doing that thing. The nobleman who should become a slave, knowing that in consequence he should be made a king, does not seem to us to afford any pattern of condescension. He must be the king already, incapable of obtaining any accession to his greatness, ere his entering the state of slavery can furnish an example of humility. And, in like manner, we can never perceive that any being but a divine Being can justly be said to have given a model of condescension in becoming our Redeemer ... If he could not lay aside the perfections, he could lay aside the glories of Deity; without ceasing to be God he could appear to be man; and herein we believe was the humiliation —herein that self-emptying which Scripture identifies with out Lord's having been "made a little lower than the angels." In place of manifesting himself in the form of God, and thereby centering on himself the delighted and reverential regards of all unfallen orders of intelligence, he must conceal himself in the form of a servant, and no longer gathering that rich tribute of homage, which had flowed from every quarter of his unlimited empire, produced by his power, sustained by his providence, he had the same essential glory, the same real dignity, which he had ever had. These belonged necessarily to his nature, and could no more be parted with, even for a time, than could that nature itself. But every outward mark of majesty and of greatness might be laid aside; and Deity, in place of coming down with such dazzling manifestations of supremacy as would have compelled the world he visited to fall prostrate and adore, might so veil his splendours, and so hide himself in an ignoble form, that when men saw him there should be no "beauty that they should desire him." And this was what Christ did, in consenting to be "made a little lower than the angels;" and in doing this he emptied himself, or "made himself of no reputation." The very being who in the form of God had given its light and magnificence to heaven appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; and not merely so— for every creature is God's servant, and therefore the form of a servant would have been assumed, had he appeared as an angel or an archangel—but in the form of the lowest of these servants, being "made in the likeness of men"—of men the degraded, the apostate, the perishing. *Henry Melvill, B.D.,* 1854.

Ver. 5-6. God magnifies man in the work of creation. The third verse shows us what it was that raised the psalmist to this admiration of the goodness of God to man: When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man? God in the work of creation made all these things serviceable and instrumental for the good of man. What is man, that he should have a sun, moon, and stars, planted in the firmament for him? What creature is this? When great preparations are made in any place, much provisions laid in, and the house adorned with richest furnitures, we say, *"What is this man that comes to such a house?"* When such a goodly fabric was raised up, the goodly house of the world adorned and furnished, we have reason admiringly to say, What is this man that must be the tenant or inhabitant of this house? There is yet a higher exaltation of man in the creation; man was magnified with the stamp of God's image, one part whereof the psalmist describes in the sixth verse, Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, etc. Thus man was magnified in creation. What was man that he should have the rule of the world given him? That he should be lord over the fish of the sea, and over the beasts of the field, and over the fowls of the air? Again, man was magnified in creation, in that God set him in the next degree to the angels; Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; there is the first part of the answer to this question, man was magnified in being made so excellent a creature, and in having so many excellent creatures made for him. All which may be understood of man as created in God's image; but since the transgression it is peculiar to Christ, as the apostle applies it (Heb 2:6), and if those who have their blood and dignity restored by the work of redemption, which is the next part of man's exaltation. *Joseph Caryl.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5. Man's relation to the angels.

The position Jesus assumed for our sakes. Manhood's crown—the glory of our nature in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Ver. 5-8. The universal providential dominion of our Lord Jesus.

EXPOSITION

Ver. 5-8. These verses may set forth man's position among the creatures before he fell; but as they are, by the apostle Paul, appropriated to man as represented by the Lord Jesus, it is best to give most weight to that meaning. In order of dignity, man stood next to the angels, and a little lower than they; in the Lord Jesus this was accomplished, for he was made a little lower than the angels by the suffering of death. Man in Eden had the full command of all creatures, and they came before him to receive their names as an act of homage to him as the viceregent of God to them. Jesus in his glory, is now Lord, not only of all living, but of all created things, and, with the exception of him who put all things under him, Jesus is Lord of all, and his elect, in him, are raised to a dominion wider than that of the first Adam, as shall be more clearly seen at his coming. Well might the Psalmist wonder at the singular exaltation of man in the scale of being, when he marked his utter nothingnesss in comparison with the starry universe.

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Ver. 6. Thou hast put all things under his feet. Hermodius, a nobleman born, upbraided the valiant captain Iphicrates for that he was but a shoemaker's son. "My blood," saith Iphicrates, "taketh beginning at me; and thy blood, at thee now taketh her farewell;" intimating that he, not honouring his house with the glory of his virtues, as the house had honoured him with the title of nobility, was but as a wooden knife put into an empty sheath to fill up the place; but for himself, he by his valorous achievements was now beginning to be the raiser of his family. Thus, in the matter of spirituality, he is the best gentleman that is the best Christian. The men of Berea, who received the word with all readiness, were more noble than those of Thessalonica. The burgesses of God's city be not of base lineage, but truly noble; they boast not of their generation, but their regeneration, which is far better; for, by their second birth they are the sons of God, and the church is their mother, and Christ their elder brother, the Holy Ghost their tutor, angels their attendants, and all other creatures their subjects, the whole world their inn, and heaven their home. *John Spencer's "Things New and Old."*

**Ver. 6.** Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, etc. For thy help against wandering thoughts in prayer... labour to keep thy distance to the world, and that sovereignty which God hath given thee over it in its profits and pleasures, or whatever else may prove a snare to thee. While the father and master know their place, and keep their distance, so long children and servants will keep theirs by being dutiful and officious; but when they forget this, the father grows fond of the one, and the master too familiar with the other, then they begin to lose their authority and the others to grow saucy and under no command; bid them go, and it may be they will not stir; set them a task, and they will bid you do it yourself. Truly, thus it fares with the Christian; all the creatures are his servants, and so long as he keeps his heart at a holy distance from them, and maintains his lordship over them, not laying them to his bosom, which God hath put under his feet, all is well; he marches to the duties of God's worship in a goodly order. He can be private with God, and these not be bold to crowd in to disturb him. *William Gurnall.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-8. The universal providential dominion of our Lord Jesus.

**Ver. 6.** Man's rights and responsibilities towards the lower animals.

**Ver. 6.** Man's dominion over the lower animals, and how he should exercise it.

**Ver. 6.** *(second clause).* The proper place for all worldly things, under his feet.

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Eph 1:21. And then leaving the highest things he descended to sheep and oxen; whereby we may understand *sanctified men* and *preachers,* for to *sheep* are the faithful often compared, and *preachers to oxen.* 1Co 9:9. "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." The beasts of the field set forth the *voluptuous* that live at large, going in the broad way: the fowls of the air, the *lifted up by pride:* the fishes of the sea, such as through a covetous desire of riches pierce into the lower parts of the earth, as the fishes dive to the bottom of the sea. And because men pass the sea again and again for riches, he addeth, that passeth through the way of the sea, and to that of diving to the bottom of the waters may be applied (1Ti 6:9), "They that will be rich, fall into many noisome lusts, that drown the soul in perdition." And hereby seem to be set forth the three things of the world of which it is said, "they that love them, the love of the Father is not in them." "The lust of the heart" being sensuality; "the lust of the eyes," covetousness; to which is added, "the pride of life." Above all these Christ was set, because without all sin; neither could any of the devil's three temptations, which may be referred hereunto, prevail with him. And all these, as well as "sheep and oxen," are in the church, for which it is said, that into the ark came all manner of beasts, both clean and unclean, and fowls; and all manner of fishes, good and bad, came into the net, as it is in the parable. All which I have set down, as of which good use may be made by the discreet reader. *John Mayer.*

Ver. 7-8. He who rules over the material world, is Lord also of the intellectual or spiritual creation represented thereby. The souls of the faithful, lowly and harmless, are the sheep of his pasture; those who, like oxen, are strong to labour in the church, and who, expounding the Word of Life, tread out the corn for the nourishment of the people, own him for their kind and beneficent Master; nay, tempers fierce and intractable as the beasts of the desert, are yet subject to his will; spirits of the angelic kind, that, like the birds of the air, traverse freely the superior region, move at his command; and those evil ones whose habitation is in the deep abyss, even to the great leviathan himself, all are put under the feet of King Messiah. *George Horne, D.D.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-8. The universal providential dominion of our Lord Jesus.

**EXPOSITION**

Ver. 5-8. These verses may set forth a man's position among the creatures before he fell; but as they are, by the apostle Paul, appropriated to man as represented by the Lord Jesus, it is best to give most weight to that meaning. In order of dignity, man stood next to the angels, and a little lower than they; in the Lord Jesus this was accomplished, for he was made a little lower than the angels by the suffering of death. Man in Eden had the full command of all creatures, and they came before him to receive their names as an act of homage to him as the viceregent of God to them. Jesus in his glory, is now Lord, not only of all living, but of all created things, and, with the exception of him who put all things under him, Jesus is Lord of all, and his elect, in him, are raised to a dominion wider than that of the first Adam, as shall be more clearly seen at his coming. Well might the Psalmist wonder at the singular exaltation of man in the scale of being, when he marked his utter nothingness in comparison with the starry universe.

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels—a little lower in nature, since they are immortal, and but a little, because time is short; and when that is over, saints are no longer lower than the angels. The margin reads it, "A little while inferior to." Thou crownest him. The dominion that God has bestowed on man is a great glory and honour to him; for all dominion is honour, and the highest is that which wears the crown. A full list is given of the subjugated creatures, to show that all the dominion lost by sin is restored in Christ Jesus. Let none of us permit the possession of any earthly creature to be a snare to us, but let us remember that we are to reign over them, and not to allow them to reign over us. Under our feet we must keep the world, and we must shun that base spirit which is content to let worldly cares and pleasures sway the empire of the immortal soul.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

(Ver. 4-8)—What is man, etc.:

—-Man is ev'ry thing, And more: he is a tree, yet bears no fruit; A beast, yet is, or should be more: Reason and speech we onely bring. Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,  
They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetrie, Full of proportions, one limbe to another,  
And all to all the world besides:  
Each part may call the farthest, brother. For head with foot hath private amitie,  
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so farre, But man hath caught and kept it, as his prey. His eyes dismount the highest starre: He is in little all the sphere. Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
Finde their acquaintance there.

For us the windes do blow; The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow. Nothing we see, but means our good, As our *delight,* or as our *treasure:* The whole is, either our cupboard of *food,*Or cabinet of *pleasure.*

The starres have us to bed: Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:  
Musick and light attend our head.  
All things unto our *flesh* are kinde In their *descent* and *being;* to our *minde*In their *ascent* and *cause.*

Each thing is full of dutie: Waters united are our navigation; Distinguished, our habitation; Below, our drink; above, our meat: Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie?  
Then how are all things neat!

More servants wait on man, Than he'l take notice of: in ev'ry path  
He treads down that which doth befriend him,  
When sicknesse makes him pale and wan, Oh, mightie love! Man is one world, and hath  
Another to attend him.

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Ver. 5-8. The universal providential dominion of our Lord Jesus.

EXPOSITION

**Ver. 9.** Here, like a good composer, the poet returns to his key-note, falling back, as it were, into his first state of wondering adoration. What he started with as a proposition in the first verse, he closes with as a well proven conclusion, with a sort of *quod erat demonstrandum.* O for grace to walk worthy of that excellent name which has been named upon us, and which we are pledged to magnify!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS

None.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 9.** The wanderer in many climes enjoying the sweetness of his Lord's name in every condition.

**÷PSALM 9**

**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician upon Muth-labben, a Psalm of David. The meaning of this title is very doubtful. It may refer to the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, so Wilcocks and others think; or it may refer to a musical instrument now unknown, but common in those days; or it may have a reference to Ben, who is mentioned in **1Ch 15:18**, as one of the Levitical singers. If either of these conjectures should be correct, the title of Muth-Labben has no teaching for us, except it is meant to show us how careful David was that in the worship of God, all things should be done according to due order. From a considerable company of learned witnesses we gather that the title will bear a meaning far more instructive, without being fancifully forced: it signifies a Psalm concerning the death of the Son. The Chaldee has, "concerning the death of the Champion who went out between the camps, "referring to Goliath of Gath, or some other Philistine, on account of whose death many suppose this Psalm to have been written in after years by David. Believing that out of a thousand guesses this is at least as consistent with the sense of the Psalm as any other, we prefer it; and the more especially so because it enables us to refer it mystically to the victory of the Son of God over the champion of evil, even to enemy of souls (**Ps 9:6**). We have here before us most evidently a triumphal hymn; may it strengthen the faith of the militant believer and stimulate the courage of the timid saint, as he sees here THE CONQUEROR, on whose vesture and thigh is the name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

**ORDER.** Bonar remarks, "The position of the Psalms in their relation to each other is often remarkable." It is questioned whether the present arrangement of them was the order to which they were given forth to Israel, or whether some later compiler, perhaps Ezra, was inspired to attend to this matter, as well as to other points connected with the canon. Without attempting to decide this point, it is enough to remark that we have proof that the order of the Psalms is as ancient as the completing of the canon, and if so, it seems obvious that the Holy Spirit wished this book to come down to us in its present order. We make these remarks, in order to invite attention to the fact, that as the eighth caught up the last line of the seventh, this ninth Psalm opens with an apparent reference to the eighth:

"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in thee.

(Compare **So 1:4 Re 19:7**) I will sing to THY NAME, O thou Most High." Psalms 1-2.

As if "The Name, "so highly praised in the former Psalm, were still ringing in the ear of the sweet singer of Israel. And in **Ps 9:10**, he returns to it, celebrating their confidence who "know" that "name" as if its fragrance still breathed in the atmosphere around.

**DIVISION.** The strain so continually changes, that it is difficult to give an outline of it methodically arranged: we give the best we can make. From **Ps 9:1-6** is a song of jubilant thanksgiving; from

**Ps 9:7-12**, there is a continued declaration of faith as to the future. Prayer closes the first great division of the Psalm in **Ps 9:13-14**. The second portion of this triumphal ode, although much shorter, is parallel in all its parts to the first portion, and is a sort of rehearsal of it. Observe the song for past judgments, **Ps 9:15-16**; the declaration of trust in future justice, **Ps 9:17-18**; and the closing prayer, **Ps 9:19-20**. Let us celebrate the conquests of the Redeemer as we read this Psalm, and it cannot but be a delightful task if the Holy Ghost be with us.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** With a holy resolution the songster begins his hymn;

**I will praise thee, O Lord.** It sometimes needs all our determination to face the foe, and bless the Lord in the teeth of his enemies; vowing that whoever else may be silent *we* will bless his name; here, however, the overthrow of the foe is viewed as complete, and the song flows with sacred fulness of delight. It is our duty to praise the Lord; let us perform it as a privilege. Observe that David's praise is all given to the Lord. Praise is to be offered to God alone; we may be grateful to the intermediate agent, but our thanks must have long wings and mount aloft to heaven.

**With my whole heart.** Half heart is no heart.

**I will show forth.** There is true praise to the thankful telling forth to others of our heavenly Father's dealings with us; this is one of the themes upon which the godly should speak often to one another, and it will not be casting pearls before swine if we make even the ungodly hear of the lovingkindness of the Lord to us.

**All thy marvellous works.** Gratitude for one mercy refreshes the memory as to thousands of others. One silver link in the chain draws up a long series of tender remembrances. Here is eternal work for us, for there can be no end to the showing forth of *all* his deeds of love. If we consider our own sinfulness and nothingness, we must feel that every work of preservation, forgiveness, conversion, deliverance, sanctification, etc., which the Lord has wrought for us, or in us is a *marvellous* work. Even in heaven, divine lovingkindness will doubtless be as much a theme of surprise as of rapture.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Whole Psalm.** We are to consider this song of praise, as I conceive, to be the language of our great Advocate and Mediator, "in the midst of the church giving thanks unto God, "and teaching us to anticipate by faith his great and final victory over all the adversaries of our peace temporal and spiritual, with especial reference to his assertion of his royal dignity on Zion, his holy mountain. The victory over the enemy, we find by the fourth verse, is again ascribed to the decision of divine justice, and the award of a righteous judge, who has at length resumed his tribunal. This renders it certain, that the claim preferred to the throne of the Almighty, could proceed from the lips of none but our MELCHISEDEC. *John Fry, B.A.,* 1842.

**Ver. 1. I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart.** As a vessel by the scent thereof tells what liquor is in it, so should our mouths smell continually of that mercy wherewith our hearts have been refreshed: for we are called vessels of mercy. *William Cowper,* 1612.

**Ver. 1. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, I will shew** **forth all thy marvellous works.** The words With my whole heart, serve at once to show the greatness of the deliverance wrought for the psalmist, and to distinguish him from the hypocrites— the coarser, who praise the Lord for his goodness merely with the lips; and the more refined, who praise him with just half their heart, while they secretly ascribe the deliverance more to themselves than to him. All thy wonders, the marvellous tokens of thy grace. The psalmist shows by this term, he recognized them in all their greatness. Where this is done, there the Lord is also praised with the whole heart. *Half heartedness,* and the depreciation of divine grace, go hand in hand. The b is the b *instrum.* The heart is the instrument of praise, the mouth only its organ. *E.W. Hengstenberg.*

**Ver. 1.** (*second clause*). When we have received any special good thing from the Lord, it is well, according as we have opportunities, to tell others of it. When the woman who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, found the missing portion of her money, she gathered her neighbours and her friends together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." We may do the same; we may tell friends and relations that we have received such and such a blessing, and that we trace it directly to the hand of God. Why have we not already done this? Is there a lurking unbelief as to whether it really came from God; or are we ashamed to own it before those who are perhaps accustomed to laugh at such things? Who knows so much of the marvellous works of God as his own people; if they be silent, how can we expect the world to see what he has done? Let us not be ashamed to glorify God, by telling what we know and feel he has done; let us watch our opportunity to bring out distinctly the fact of his acting; let us feel delighted at having an opportunity, from our own experience, of telling what must turn to his praise; and them that honour God, God will honour in turn; if we be willing to talk of his deeds, he will give us enough to talk about. *P. B. Power, in "I Wills" of the Psalms.*

**Ver. 1-2. I will confess unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart,** etc. Behold with what a flood of the most sweet affections he says that he **will confess, show forth, rejoice, be glad,** and **sing,** being filled with ecstasy! He does not simply say, *"I will* *confess,* but, *with my heart,* and *with my whole heart."* Nor does he propose to speak simply of *"works, "*but of the *marvellous works* of God, and of *all* those *"works."* Thus his spirit (like John in the womb) exults and rejoices in God his Saviour, who has done great things for him, and those marvellous things which follow. In which words are opened the subject of this Psalm: that is, that he therein sings the marvellous works of God. And these works are wonderful, because he converts, by those who are nothing, those who have all things, and, by the ALMUTH who live in hidden faith, and are dead to the world, he humbles those who flourish in glory, and are looked upon in the world. Thus accomplishing such mighty things without force, without arms, without labour, by the cross only and blood. But how will his saying, that he will show forth *"all"* his marvellous works, agree with that of **Job 9:10**, "which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number"? For, who can show forth all the marvellous works of God? We may say, therefore, that these things are spoken in that excess of feeling in which he said, (**Ps 6:6**), "I will water my couch with my tears." That is, he hath such an ardent desire to speak of the wonderful works of God, that, as far as his wishes are concerned, he *would* set the *"all"* forth, though he *could* not do it, for love has neither bounds nor end: and, as Paul saith (**1Co 13:7**), "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things; "hence it can do all things, and does do all things, for God looketh at the heart and spirit. *Martin Luther.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 1.**

1. The only object of our praise— **thee, O Lord.**

2. The abundant themes of praise— **all thy marvellous works.**

3. The proper nature of praise— **with my whole heart.** *B. Davies.*

**Ver. 1. I will show forth.** Endless employment and enjoyment.

**Ver. 1. Thy marvellous works.** Creation, Providence, Redemption, are all marvellous, as exhibiting the attributes of God in such a degree as to excite the wonder of all God's universe. A very suggestive topic.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** Gladness and joy are the appropriate spirit in which to praise the goodness of the Lord. Birds extol the Creator in notes of overflowing joy, the cattle low forth his praise with tumult of happiness, and the fish leap up in his worship with excess of delight. Moloch may be worshipped with shrieks of pain, and Juggernaut may be honoured by dying groans and inhuman yells, but he whose name is Love is best pleased with the holy mirth, and sanctified gladness of his people. Daily rejoicing is an ornament to the Christian character, and a suitable robe for God's choristers to wear. God loveth a *cheerful* giver, whether it be the gold of his purse or the gold of his mouth which he presents upon his altar.

**I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.** Songs are the fitting expression of inward thankfulness, and it were well if we indulge ourselves and honoured our Lord with more of them. Mr. B. P. Power has well said, "The sailors give a cheery cry as they weigh anchor, the ploughman whistles in the morning as he drives his team; the milkmaid sings her rustic song as she sets about her early task; when soldiers are leaving friends behind them, they do not march out to the tune of the `Dead March in Saul, 'but to the quick notes of some lively air. A praising spirit would do for us all that their songs and music do for them; and if only we could determine to praise the Lord, we should surmount many a difficulty which our low spirits never would have been equal to, and we should do double the work which can be done if the heart be languid in its beating, if we be crushed and trodden down in soul. As the evil spirit in Saul yielded in olden time to the influence of the harp of the son of Jesse, so would the spirit of melancholy often take flight from us, if only we would take up the song of praise."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 1-2. I will confess unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, See Psalms on "Ps 9:1"** for further information.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 2.** Sacred song: its connection with holy gladness.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 3.** God's presence is evermore sufficient to work the defeat of our most furious foes, and their ruin is so complete when the Lord takes them in hand, that even flight cannot save them, they fall to rise no more when he pursues them. We must be careful, like David, to give all the glory to him whose presence gives the victory. If we have here the exultings of our conquering Captain, let us make the triumphs of the Redeemer the triumphs of the redeemed, and rejoice with him at the total discomfiture of all his foes.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3. When mine enemies are turned back,** etc. *Were turned* *back,* repulsed, and put to flight. To render this in the present time, as our translators did, is certainly improper; it destroys the coherence, and introduces obscurity. Ainsworth saw this, and rendered in the past, "When mine enemies turned backward." *"At thy* *presence."* That is, by thine anger. For as God's presence or face denotes his favour to such as fear and serve him, so it denotes his anger towards the wicked. "The face of Jehovah is against them that do evil." *B. Boothroyd,* 1824.

**Ver. 3. They shall fall and perish.** It refers to those that either faint in a march, or are wounded in a battle, or especially that in flight meet with galling haps in their way, and so are galled and lamed, rendered unable to go forward, and so fall, and become liable to all the chances of pursuits, and as here, are overtaken and perish in the fall. *Henry Hammond, D.D.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 4.** One of our nobility has for his motto, "I will maintain it; "but the Christian has a better and more humble one, "Thou hast maintained it." "God and my right, "are united by my faith: while God lives my right shall never be taken from me. If we seek to maintain the cause and honour of our Lord we may suffer reproach and misrepresentation, but it is a rich comfort to remember that he who sits on the throne knows our hearts, and will not leave us to the ignorant and ungenerous judgment of erring man.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 4.** (1) The rights of the righteous are sure to be assailed, (2) but equally sure to be defended.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 5.** God rebukes before he destroys, but when he once comes to blows with the wicked he ceases not until he has dashed them in pieces so small that their very name is forgotten, and like a noisome snuff their remembrance is put out for ever and ever. How often the word "thou" occurs in this and the former verse, to show us that the grateful strain mounts up directly to the Lord as doth the smoke from the altar when the air is still. My soul send up all the music of all thy powers to him who has been and is thy sure deliverance.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen,** etc. — Augustine applies all this mystically, as is intimated (**Ps 9:1**) that it should be applied, for, "I will speak, "saith he, "of all thy wonderful works; " and what so wonderful as the turning of the spiritual enemy backward, whether the devil, as when he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; "or the old man, which is turned backward when he is put off, and the new man put on? *John Mayer.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 6.** Here the Psalmist exults over the fallen foe. He bends as it were, over his prostrate form, and insults his once vaunted strength. He plucks the boaster's song out of his mouth, and sings it for him in derision. After this fashion doth our Glorious Redeemer ask of death, "Where is thy sting?" and of the grave, "Where is thy victory?" The spoiler is spoiled, and he who made captive is led into captivity himself. Let the daughters of Jerusalem go forth to meet their King, and praise him with timbrel and harp.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 6.**

1. The great enemy.

2. The destruction he has caused.

3. The means of his overthrow.

4. The rest which shall ensue.

**EXPOSITION**

In the light of the past the future is not doubtful. Since the same Almighty God fills the throne of power, we can with unhesitating confidence, exult in our security for all time to come.

**Ver. 7.** The enduring existence and unchanging dominion of our Jehovah, are the firm foundations of our joy. The enemy and his destructions shall come to a perpetual end, but God and his throne **shall endure for ever.** The eternity of divine sovereignty yields unfailing consolation. By the throne being **prepared for judgment,** are we not to understand the swiftness of divine justice. In heaven's court suitors are not worn out with long delays. Term time lasts all the year round in the court of King's Bench above. Thousands may come at once to the throne of the Judge of all the earth, but neither plaintiff nor defendant shall have to complain that he is not prepared to give their cause a fair hearing.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 7.** (*first clause*). The eternity of God— the comfort of saints, the terror of sinners.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 8.** Whatever earthly courts may do, heaven's throne ministers judgment in uprightness. Partiality and respect of persons are things unknown in the dealings of the Holy One of Israel. How the prospect of appearing before the impartial tribunal of the Great King should act as a check to us when tempted to sin, and as a comfort when we are slandered or oppressed.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 8. He shall judge the world in righteousness.** In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late; and as for riches, honourable titles, sceptres, and diadems, these will profit much less; and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought nor one idle word (not repented of in the life past), shall be forgotten. For truth itself hath said, not in jest, but in earnest, "Of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment." Oh, how many which now sin with great delight, yea, even with greediness (as if we served a god of wood or of stone, which seeth nothing, or can do nothing), will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent! Then shall the days of thy mirth be ended, and thou shalt be overwhelmed with everlasting darkness; and instead of thy pleasures, thou shalt have everlasting torments. *Thomas Tymme.*

**Ver. 8. He shall judge the world in righteousness.** Even Paul, in his great address on Mars' Hill, a thousand years after, could find no better words in which to teach the Athenians the doctrine of the judgment day than the Septuagint rendering of this clause. *William S. Plumer.*

**Ver. 8.** The guilty conscience cannot abide this day. The silly sheep, when she is taken, will not bleat, but you may carry her and do what you will with her, and she will be subject; but the swine, if she be once taken, she will roar and cry, and thinks she is never taken but to be slain. So of all things the guilty conscience cannot abide to hear of this day, for they know that when they hear of it, they hear of their own condemnation. I think if there were a general collection made through the whole world that there might be no judgment day, then God would be so rich that the world would go begging and be a waste wilderness. Then the covetous judge would bring forth his bribes; then the crafty lawyer would fetch out his bags; the usurer would give his gain, and a double thereof. But all the money in the world will not serve for our sin, but the judge must answer his bribes, he that hath money must answer how he came by it, and just condemnation must come upon every soul of them; then shall the sinner be ever dying and never dead, like the salamander, that is ever in the fire and never consumed. *Henry Smith.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 8.** The justice of God's moral government, especially in relation to the last great day.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 9.** He who gives no quarter to the wicked in the day of judgment, is the defence and refuge of his saints in the day of trouble. There are many forms of oppression; both from man and from Satan oppression comes to us; and for all its forms, a refuge is provided in the Lord Jehovah. There were cities of refuge under the law, God is our refuge city under the gospel. As the ships when vexed with tempest make for harbour, so do the oppressed hasten to the wings of a just and gracious God. He is a high tower so impregnable, that the hosts of hell cannot carry it by storm, and from its lofty heights faith looks down with scorn upon her enemies.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 9.** It is reported of the Egyptians that, living in the fens, and being vexed with gnats, they used to sleep in high towers, whereby, those creatures not being able to soar so high, they are delivered from the biting of them: so would it be with us when bitten with cares and fear, did we but run to God for refuge, and rest confident of his help. *John Trapp.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 9.** Needy people, needy times, all sufficient provision.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 10.** Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon

**the name** of God. This most excellent knowledge leads to the most excellent grace of faith. O, to learn more of the attributes and character of God. Unbelief, that hooting night bird, cannot live in the light of divine knowledge, it flies before the sun of God's great and gracious name. If we read this verse literally, there is, no doubt, a glorious fulness of assurance in the names of God. We have recounted them in the "Hints for Preachers, "and would direct the reader's attention to them. By knowing his name is also meant an experimental acquaintance with the attributes of God, which are every one of them anchors to hold the soul from drifting in seasons of peril. The Lord may hide his face for a season from his people, but he never has utterly, finally, really, or angrily

**forsaken them that seek him.** Let the poor seekers draw comfort from this fact, and let the finders rejoice yet more exceedingly, for what must be the Lord's faithfulness to those who find if he is so gracious to those who seek.

"O hope of every contrite heart,

O joy of all the meek, To those who fall how kind thou art,

How good to those who seek.

"But what to those who find, ah, this

Nor tongue nor pen can show The love of Jesus what it is,

None but his loved ones know."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 10. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.** Faith is an intelligent grace; though there can be knowledge without faith, yet there can be no faith without knowledge. One calls it quick sighted faith. Knowledge must carry the torch before faith. **2Ti 1:12**. "For I know whom I have believed." As in Paul's conversion a light from heaven "Shined round about him" (**Ac 9:3**), so before faith be wrought, God shines in with a light upon the understanding. A blind faith is as bad as a dead faith: that eye may as well be said to be a good eye which is without sight, as that faith is good without knowledge. Devout ignorance damns; which condemns the church of Rome, that thinks it a piece of their religion to be kept in ignorance; these set up an altar to an unknown God. They say ignorance is the mother of devotion; but sure where the sun is set in the understanding, it must needs be night in the affections. So necessary is knowledge to the being of faith, that the Scriptures do sometimes baptise faith with the name of knowledge. **Isa 53:11**. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Knowledge is put there for faith. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 10. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for, thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.** The mother of unbelief is ignorance of God, his faithfulness, mercy, and power. *They that know thee, will trust in thee.* This confirmed Paul, Abraham, Sarah, in the faith. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." **2Ti 1:12**. "He is faithful that promised, "and "able also to perform." **Heb 10:23 11:11 Ro 4:21**. The free promises of the Lord are all certain, his commandments right and good, the recompense of reward inestimably to be valued above thousands of gold and silver; trust therefore in the Lord, O my soul, and follow hard after him. Thou hast his free promise, who never failed, who hath promised more than possibly thou couldest ask or think, who hath done more for thee than ever he promised, who is good and bountiful to the wicked and ungodly; thou doest his work, who is able and assuredly will bear thee out. There is a crown of glory proposed to thee above all conceit of merit; stick fast unto his word, and suffer nothing to divide thee from it. Rest upon his promises though he seem to kill thee; cleave unto his statutes though the flesh lust, the world allure, the devil tempt, by flatteries or threatenings to the contrary. *John Ball,* 1632.

**Ver. 10. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.** They can do no otherwise who savingly know God's sweet attributes, and noble acts for his people. We never trust a man till we know him, and bad men are better known than trusted. Not so the Lord; for where his name is ointment poured forth, the virgins love him, fear him, rejoice in him, and repose upon him. *John Trapp.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 10.**

1. All important knowledge— **know thy name.**

2. Blessed result— **will put their trust in thee.**

3. Sufficient reason— **for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken** **them that seek thee.**

*T. W. Medhurst.*

Knowledge, Faith, Experience, the connection of the three.

**Ver. 10.** The names of God inspire trust. JEHOVAH *Jireh, Tsidkenu, Rophi, Shammah, Nissi,* ELOHIM, SHADDAI, ADONAI, etc.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 11.** Being full of gratitude himself, our inspired author is eager to excite others to join the strain, and praise God in the same manner as he himself vowed to do in the first and second verses. The heavenly spirit of praise is gloriously contagious, and he that hath it is never content unless he can excite all who surround him to unite in his sweet employ. Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther's Psalms and Hymns were in all men's mouths, and in the modern revival under Wesley and Whitefield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety. The singing of the birds of praise fitly accompanies the return of the gracious spring of divine visitation through the proclamation of the truth. Sing on brethren, and preach on, and these shall both be a token that the Lord still dwelleth in Zion. It will be well for us when coming up to Zion, to remember that the Lord dwells among his saints, and is to be had in peculiar reverence of all those that are about him.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 11.**

1. Zion, what is it?

2. Her glorious inhabitant, what doth he?

3. The twofold occupation of her sons— "sing praises, " "declare among the people his doings."

4. Arguments from the first part of the subject to encourage us in the double duty.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 12.** When an inquest is held concerning the blood of the oppressed, the martyred saints will have the first remembrance; he will avenge his own elect. Those saints who are living shall also be heard; they shall be exonerated from blame, and kept from destruction, even when the Lord's most terrible work is going on; the man with the inkhorn by his side shall mark them all for safety, before the slaughtermen are permitted to smite the Lord's enemies. The humble cry of the poorest saints shall neither be drowned by the voice of the thundering justice nor by the shrieks of the condemned.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them.** There is a time when God will make inquisition for innocent blood. The Hebrew word *doresh*, from *darash*, that is here rendered *inquisition*, signifies not barely to seek, to search, but to seek, search, and enquire with all diligence and care imaginable. Oh, there is a time coming when the Lord will make a very diligent and careful search and enquiry after all the innocent blood of his afflicted and persecuted people, which persecutors and tyrants have spilt as water upon the ground; and woe to persecutors when God shall make a more strict, critical, and careful enquiry after the blood of his people than ever was made in the inquisition of Spain, where all things are carried with the greatest diligence, subtlety, secrecy, and severity. O persecutors, there is a time coming, when God will make a strict enquiry after the blood of Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Taylor, Ridley, etc. There is a time coming, wherein God will enquire who silenced and suspended such and such ministers, and who stopped the mouths of such and such, and who imprisoned, confined, and banished such and such, who were once burning and shining lights, and who were willing to spend and be spent that sinners might be saved, and that Christ might be glorified. There is a time when the Lord will make a very narrow enquiry into all the actions and practices of ecclesiastical courts, high commissions, committees, assizes, etc., and deal with persecutors as they have dealt with his people. *Thomas* *Brooks.*

**Ver. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them.** There is *vox sanguinis*, a voice of blood; and "he that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" It covered the old world with waters. The earth is filled with cruelty; it was [vox sanguinis that cried, and the heavens heard the earth, and the windows of heaven opened to let fall judgment and vengeance upon it. *Edward Marbury, 1649.*

**Ver. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood,** etc. Though God may seem to wink for a time at the cruelty of violent men, yet will call them at last to a strict account for all the innocent blood they have shed, and for their unjust and unmerciful usage of meek and humble persons; whose cry he never forgets (though he doth not presently answer it), but takes a fit time to be avenged of their oppressors. *Symon Patrick, D.D., 1626-1707.*

**Ver. 12. He maketh inquisition for blood.** He is so stirred at this sin, that he will up, search out the authors, contrivers, and commissioners of this scarlet sin, he will avenge for blood. *William Greenhill.*

**Ver. 12. He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.** Prayer is a haven to the shipwrecked man, an anchor to them that are sinking in the waves, a staff to the limbs that totter, a mine of jewels to the poor, a healer of diseases, and a guardian of health. Prayer at once secures the continuance of our blessings, and dissipates the clouds of our calamities. O blessed prayer! thou art the unwearied conqueror of human woes, the firm foundation of human happiness, the source of ever enduring joy, the mother of philosophy. The man who can pray truly, though languishing in most extreme indigence, is richer than all beside, whilst the wretch who never bowed the knee, though proudly sitting as monarch of all nations, is of all men most destitute. *Chrysostom.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 12.**

1. God on awful business.

2. Remembers his people; to spare, honour, bless, and avenge them.

3. Fulfils their cries, in their own salvation, and overthrow of enemies. A consolatory sermon for times of war or pestilence.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 13.** Memories of the past and confidences concerning the future conducted the man of God to the mercy seat to plead for the needs of the present. Between praising and praying he divided all his time. How could he have spent it more profitably? His first prayer is one suitable for all persons and occasions, it breathes a humble spirit, indicates self knowledge, appeals to the proper attributes, and to the fitting person.

**Have mercy upon me, O Lord.** Just as Luther used to call some texts little bibles, so we may call this sentence a little prayer book; for it has in it the soul and marrow of prayer. It is "multum in parvo", and like the angelic sword turns every way. The ladder looks to be short, but it reaches from earth to heaven.

What a noble title is here given to the Most High.

**Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death!** What a glorious lift! In sickness, in sin, in despair, in temptation, we have been brought very low, and the gloomy portal has seemed as if it would open to imprison us, but, underneath us were the everlasting arms, and, therefore, we have been uplifted even to the gates of heaven. Trapp quaintly says, "He commonly reserveth his hand for a dead lift, and rescueth those who were even talking of their graves."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord.** The publican's prayer expounded, commended, presented, and fulfilled.

**Ver. 13. Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.** Deep distresses, Great deliverances. Glorious exaltations.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 14.** We must not overlook David's object in desiring mercy, it is God's glory:

**that I may show forth all thy praise.** Saints are not so selfish as to look only to self; they desire mercy's diamond that they may let others see it flash and sparkle, and may admire Him who gives such priceless gems to his beloved. The contrast between the gates of death and the gates of the New Jerusalem is very striking; let our songs be excited to the highest and most rapturous pitch by the double consideration of whence we are taken, and to what we have been advanced, and let our prayers for mercy be made more energetic and agonizing by a sense of the grace which such a salvation implies. When David speaks of his showing forth *all* God's praise, he means that, in his deliverance grace in all its heights and depths would be magnified. Just as our hymn puts it: —

"O the length and breadth of love!

Jesus, Saviour, can it be? All thy mercy's height I prove,

All the depth is seen in me."

Here ends the first part of this instructive Psalm, and in pausing awhile we feel bound to confess that our exposition has only flitted over its surface and has not digged into the depths. The verses are singularly full of teaching, and if the Holy Spirit shall bless the reader, he may go over this Psalm, as the writer has done scores of times, and see on each occasion fresh beauties.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 14. That I may show forth all thy praise,** etc. To show forth *all* God's praise is to enter largely into the work. An occasional *"God, I thank thee, "*is no fit return for a perpetual stream of rich benefits. *William S. Plumer.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 14. I will rejoice in thy salvation.** Especially because it is *thine,* O God, and therefore honours thee. In its freeness, fulness, suitability, certainty, everlastingness. Who can rejoice in this? Reasons why they should always do so.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 15.** In considering this terrible picture of the Lord's overwhelming judgments of his enemies, we are called upon to ponder and meditate upon it with deep seriousness by the two untranslated words, Higgaion, Selah. Meditate, pause. Consider, and tune your instrument. Bethink yourselves and solemnly adjust your hearts to the solemnity which is so well becoming the subject. Let us in a humble spirit approach these verses, and notice, first, that the character of God requires the punishment of sin.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made,** etc. Whilst they are digging pits for others, there is a pit digging and a grave making for themselves. They have a measure to make up, and a treasure to fill, which at length will be broken open, which, I think, should take off them which are set upon mischief from pleasing themselves in their plots. Alas! they are but plotting their own ruin, and building a Babel which will fall upon their own heads. If there were any commendation in plotting, then that great plotter of plotters, that great engineer, Satan, would go beyond us all, and take all the credit from us. But let us not envy Satan and his in their glory. They had need of something to comfort them. Let them please themselves with their trade. The day is coming wherein the daughter of Sion shall laugh them to scorn. There will be a time wherein it shall be said, "Arise, Sion, and thresh." **Mic 4:13**. And usually the delivery of God's children is joined with the destruction of his enemies; Saul's death, and David's deliverance; the Israelites' deliverance, and the Egyptians drowning. The church and her opposites are like the scales of a balance; when one goes up, the other goes down. *Richard Sibbs.*

**Ver. 15-17.** It will much increase the torment of the damned, in that their torments will be as large and strong as their understandings and affections, which will cause those violent passions to be still working. Were their loss never so great, and their sense of it never so passionate, yet if they could but lose the use of their memory, those passions would die, and that loss being forgotten, would little trouble them. But as they cannot lay by their life and being, though then they would account annihilation a singular mercy, so neither can they lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. And as by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence, so by these must they now feed upon the wrath of God, and draw forth continually the dolours of his absence. Therefore, never think, that when I say the hardness of their hearts, and their blindness, dulness, and forgetfulness shall be removed, that therefore they are more holy and happy than before: no, but morally more vile, and hereby far more miserable. Oh, how many times did God by his messengers here call upon them, "Sinners, consider whither you are going. Do but make a stand awhile, and think where your way will end, what is the offered glory that you so carelessly reject: will not this be bitterness in the end?" And yet, these men would never be brought to consider. But in the latter days, saith the Lord, they shall perfectly consider it, when they are *ensnared in the work of their own hands,* when God hath arrested them, and judgment is passed upon them, and vengeance is poured out upon them to the full, then they cannot choose but consider it, whether they will or no. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life. Ah! but then they shall have leisure enough, they shall be where they shall have nothing else to do but consider it: their memories shall have no other employment to hinder them; it shall even be engraven upon the tables of their hearts. God would have the doctrine of their eternal state to have been written on the posts of their doors, on their houses, on their hands, and on their hearts: he would have had them mind it and mention it, as they rise and lie down, and as they walk abroad, that so it might have gone well with them at their latter end. And seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore shall it be written always before them in the place of their thraldom, that which way soever they look they may still behold it. *Richard Baxter.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 15.** *Lex talionis.* Memorable instances.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 16. Jehovah is known by the judgment which he executeth;** his holiness and abhorrence of sin is thus displayed. A ruler who winked at evil would soon be known by all his subjects to be evil himself, and he, on the other hand, who is severely just in judgment reveals his own nature thereby. So long as our God is God, he will not, he cannot spare the guilty; except through that one glorious way in which he is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. We must notice, secondly, that the manner of his judgment is singularly wise, and indisputably just. He makes the wicked become their own executioners.

"The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made, "etc. Like cunning hunters they prepared a pitfall for the godly and fell into it themselves: the foot of the victim escaped their crafty snares, but the toils surrounded themselves: the cruel snare was laboriously manufactured, and it proved its efficacy by snaring its own maker. Persecutors and oppressors are often ruined by their own malicious projects. "Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; " the contentious are involved in ruinous costs; the vicious are devoured with fierce diseases; the envious eat their own hearts; and blasphemers curse their own souls. Thus, men may read their sin in their punishment. They sowed the seed of sin, and the ripe fruit of damnation is the natural result.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 15-17.** **See Psalms on "Ps 9:15** for further information.

**Ver. 16. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.** Now if the Lord be known by the judgment which he executeth; then, the judgment which he executeth must be known; it must be an open judgment; and such are very many of the judgments of God, they are acted as upon a stage. And I may give you an account in three particulars why the Lord will sometimes do justice in the place of beholders, or in the open sight of others. First, that there may be witnesses enough of what he doth, and so a record of it be kept, at least in the minds and memories of faithful men for the generations to come. Secondly, the Lord doth it not only that he may have witnesses of his justice, but also that his justice and the proceedings of it, may have an effect and a fruit upon those who did not feel it, nor fall under it. This was the reason why the Lord threatened to punish Jerusalem in the sight of the nations. **Eze 5:6-8,14-15**...God would execute judgment in Jerusalem, a city placed in the midst of the nations, that as the nations had taken notice of the extraordinary favours, benefits, deliverances, and salvations which God wrought for Jerusalem, so they might also take notice of his judgments and sore displeasure against them. Jerusalem was not seated in some nook, corner, or by place of the world, but in the midst of the nations, that both the goodness and severity of God toward them might be conspicuous...God lets some sinners suffer, or punishes them openly, both because he would have all others take notice that he dislikes what they have done, as also because he would not have others do the like, lest they be made like them, both in the matter and manner of their sufferings. It is a favour as well as our duty, to be taught by other men's harms, and to be instructed by their strokes, to prevent our own...Thirdly, God strikes some wicked men in open view, or in the place of beholders for the comfort of his own people, and for their encouragement. **Ps 58:10-11**. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; "not that he shall be glad of the vengeance, purely as it is a hurt or a suffering to the creature; but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and an evidence of his own holiness...It is said (**Ex 14:30-31**), that God having overwhelmed the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore: God did not suffer the carcases of the Egyptians to sink to the bottom of the sea, but caused them to lie upon the shore, that the Israelites might see them; and when Israel saw that dreadful stroke of the Lord upon the Egyptians, it is said, "The people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." Thus they were confirmed in their faith by God's open judgments upon the Egyptians. They were smitten in the place of the beholders, or in the open sight of others. *Condensed from Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 16. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth;** when he lays his hand upon sinners, saints tremble, consider his power, majesty, greatness, the nature of his judgments, and so judge themselves, and remove out of the way whatever may provoke... As fire begets a splendour round about where it is, so do the judgments of God set out to the world his glory, justice, holiness. *William Greenhill.*

**Ver. 16. Snared in the work of his own hands.** The wages that sin bargains with the sinner are life, pleasure, and profit; but the wages it pays him with are death, torment, and destruction. He that would understand the falsehood and deceit of sin, must compare its promises and its payment together. *Robert South, D.D.,* 1633-1716.

**Ver. 16. Higgaion, Selah,** that is, as Ainsworth renders it, "Meditation, Selah:" showing this ought to be seriously considered of. The word *"Higgaion"* is again had (**Ps 92:3**); being mentioned among other musical instruments, whereby we may gather it to be one of them; for there is psaltery, nable, higgaion, and harp, *John Mayer.*

**Ver. 16. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.** Not only do we read it in the word of God, but all history, all experience, records the same righteous justice of God, in snaring the wicked in the work of their own hands. Perhaps the most striking instance on record, next to Haman on his own gallows, is one connected with the horrors of the French Revolution, in which we are told that, "within nine months of the death of the queen Marie Antoinette by the guillotine, every one implicated in her untimely end, her accusers, the judges, the jury, the prosecutors, the witnesses, all, every one at least whose fate is known, perished by the same instrument as their innocent victim." In the net which they had laid for her was their own foot taken— into the pit which they digged for her did they themselves fall. *Barton Bouchier,* 1855.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 16.** Awful knowledge; a tremendous alternative as compared with **Ps 9:10**.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 17.** The justice which has punished the wicked, and preserved the righteous, remains the same, and therefore in days to come, retribution will surely be meted out. How solemn is **Ps 9:17**, especially in its warning to forgetters of God. The moral who are not devout, the honest who are not prayerful, the benevolent who are not believing, the amiable who are not converted, these must all have their own portion with the openly wicked in the hell which is prepared for the devil and his angels. There are whole nations of such; the forgetters of God are far more numerous than the profane or profligate, and according to the very forceful expression of the Hebrew, the nethermost hell will be the place into which all of them shall be hurled headlong. Forgetfulness seems a small sin, but it brings eternal wrath upon the man who lives and dies in it.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 15-17.** **See Psalms on "Ps 9:15"** for further information.

**Ver. 17.** The ungodly at death must undergo God's fury and indignation. **The wicked shall be turned into hell.** I have read of a lodestone in Ethiopia which hath two corners, with one it draws the iron to it, with the other it puts the iron from it: so God hath two hands, of mercy and justice; with the one he will draw the godly to heaven, with the other he will thrust the sinner to hell; and oh, how dreadful is that place! It is called a fiery lake (**Re 20:15**); a lake, to denote the plenty of torments in hell; a fiery lake, to show the fierceness of them: fire is the most torturing element. Strabo in his geography mentions a lake in Galilee of such a pestiferous nature that it scalds off the skin of whatsoever is cast into it; but, alas! that lake is cool compared with this fiery lake into which the damned are thrown. To demonstrate this fire terrible, there are two most pernicious qualities in it. 1. It is sulphurous, it is mixed with brimstone (**Re 21:8**), which is unsavoury and suffocating. 2. It is inextinguishable; though the wicked shall be choked in the flames, yet not consumed (**Re 20:10**); "And the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Behold the deplorable condition of all ungodly ones in the other world, they shall have a life that always dies, and a death that always lives: may not this affright men out of their sins, and make them become godly? unless they are resolved to try how hot the hell fire is. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell,** etc. By *"the* *wicked"* here we must understand unregenerate persons, whoever they are that are in a state of unregeneracy... That person is here spoken of as a *"wicked"* man that **forgets God,** who does not think of him frequently, and with affection, with fear and delight, and those affections that are suitable to serious thoughts of God... To forget God and to be a wicked person is all one. And these two things will abundantly evince the truth of this assertion: namely, that this forgetfulness of God excludes the prime and main essentials of religion, and also includes in it the highest and most heinous pieces of wickedness, and therefore must needs denominate the subject, a wicked person... Forgetfulness of God excludes the principal and essential parts of religion. It implies that a man doth neither esteem nor value the all sufficiency and holiness of God, as his happiness and portion, as his strength and support; nor doth he fear him, nor live in subjection to his laws and commands, as his rule; nor doth he aim at the glory of God as his end: therefore every one who thus forgets God, must certainly be a wicked person... To exclude God out of our thoughts and not to let him have a place there, not to mind, nor think upon God, is the greatest wickedness of the thoughts that can be. And, therefore, though you cannot say of such a one, he will be drunk, or he will swear, cozen, or oppress; yet if you can say he will forget God, or that he lives all his days never minding nor thinking upon God, you say enough to speak him under wrath, and to turn him into hell without remedy. *John Howe,* 1630-1705.

**Ver. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell.** (hlwavl); *Lisholah— headlong into hell, down into hell.* The original is very emphatic. *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 17.** All wickedness came originally with the wicked one from hell; thither it will again be remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state of "nations, "and the individuals of which they are composed, is to be estimated from one single circumstance; namely, whether in their doings they remember, or "forget God." Remembrance of him is the well spring of virtue; forgetfulness of him, the fountain of vice. *George Horne, D.D.*

**Ver. 17.**

*Hell,* their fit habitation, fraught with fire Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain.

*John Milton,* 1608-1674.

**Ver. 17.**

Will without power, the element of *hell,* Abortive all its acts returning still Upon itself; ...Oh, anguish terrible! Meet guerdon of self love, its proper ill! Malice would scowl upon the foe he fears; And he with lip of scorn would seek to kill; But neither sees the other, neither hears— For darkness each in his own dungeon bars, Lust pines for dearth, and grief drinks its own tears— Each in its solitude apart. Hate wars Against himself, and feeds upon his chain, Whose iron penetrates the soul it scars, A dreadful solitude each mind insane, Each its own place, its prison all alone, And finds no sympathy to soften pain.

*J. A. Heraud.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 17.** A warning to forgetters of God.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 18.** Mercy is as ready to her work as ever justice can be. Needy souls fear that they are forgotten; well, if it be so, let them rejoice that they

**shall not alway** be so. Satan tells poor tremblers that their hope shall perish, but they have here the divine assurance that

**their expectation shall not perish for ever.** "The Lord's people are a humbled people, afflicted, emptied, sensible of need, driven to a daily attendance on God, daily begging of him, and living upon the hope of what is promised; "such persons may have to wait, but they shall find that they do not wait in vain.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 18. For the needy shall not alway be forgotten,** etc. This is a sweet promise for a thousand occasions, and when pleaded before the throne in his name who comprehends in himself every promise, and is indeed himself the great promise of the Bible, it would be found like all others, yea and amen. *Robert Hawker, D.D.,* 1820.

**Ver. 18. The expectation of the poor shall not perish.** A heathen could say, when a bird, scared by a hawk, flew into his bosom, I will not betray thee unto thy enemy, seeing thou comest for sanctuary unto me. How much less will God yield up a soul unto its enemy, when it takes sanctuary in his name, saying, Lord, I am hunted with such a temptation, dogged with such a lust; either thou must pardon it, or I am damned; mortify it, or I shall be a slave to it; take me into the bosom of thy love for Christ's sake; castle me in the arms of thy everlasting strength; it is in thy power to save me from, or give me up into the hands of my enemy; I have no confidence in myself or any other: into thy hands I commit my cause myself, and rely on thee. This dependence of a soul undoubtedly will awaken the almighty power of God for such a one's defence. He hath sworn the greatest oath that can come out of his blessed lips, even by himself, that such as thus fly for refuge to hope in him, shall have strong consolation. **Heb 6:17**. This indeed may give the saint the greater boldness of faith to expect kind entertainment when he repairs to God for refuge, because he cannot come before he is looked for; God having set up his name and promises as a strong tower, both calls his people into these chambers and expects they should betake themselves thither. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 18.** As sometimes God is said to hear us in not hearing us, so we may say he should sometimes deny us if he did not delay us, It is (saith Chrysostom) like money, which lying long in the bank, comes home at last with a duck in its mouth, with use upon use; when money is out a great time, it makes a great return: we can stay thus upon men, and cannot we, shall not we, stay upon the Lord, and for the Lord, for a large return? God causeth us by delay to make the more prayers; and the more we pray, the longer we stay, the more comfort we shall have, and the more sure we are that we shall have it in the latter end. Distinguish between denying and delaying... In God *our Father* are all dimensions of love, and that in an infinite degree; infinitely infinite: what if he defer us? so do we our children, albeit we mean no other but to give them their own asking, yet we love to see them wait, that so they may have from us the best things, when they are at the best, in the best time, and in the best manner: if a mother should forget her only boy, yet God hath an infinite memory, he nor can, nor will forget us; the expectation of the *waiter* shall not fail *for* *ever,* that is, *never*. *Richard Capel.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 18.** Delays in deliverance.

1. Unbelief's estimate of the— **forgotten**, **perish.**

2. God's promise— **not always.**

3. Faith's duty— wait.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 19.** Prayers are the believer's weapons of war. When the battle is too hard for us, we call in our great ally, who, as it were, lies in ambush until faith gives the signal by crying out,

**Arise, O Lord.** Although our cause be all but lost, it shall be soon won again, if the Almighty doth but bestir himself. He will not suffer man to prevail over God, but with swift judgments will confound their gloryings. In the very sight of God the wicked will be punished, and he who is now all tenderness will have no bowels of compassion for them, since they had no tears of repentance while their day of grace endured.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 19. Arise, O Lord,** etc. What does this mean? Are we to consider the psalmist as praying for the destruction of his enemies, as pronouncing a malediction, a curse upon them? No; these are not the words of one who is wishing that mischief may happen to his enemies; they are the words of a prophet, of one who is foretelling, in Scripture language, the evil that must befall them on account of their sins. *Augustine.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 19. Let not man prevail.** A powerful plea. Cases when employed in Scripture. The reason of its power. Times for its use.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 20.** One would think that men would not grow so vain as to deny themselves to be but men, but it appears to be a lesson which only a divine schoolmaster can teach to some proud spirits. Crowns leave their wearers

**but men,** degrees of eminent learning make their owners not more than *men,* valour and conquest cannot elevate beyond the dead level of *"but men; "*and all the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom of Solon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. May we ever remember this lest like those in the text, we should be

**put in fear.** Before leaving this Psalm, it will be very profitable if the student will peruse it again as the triumphal hymn of the Redeemer, as he devoutly brings the glory of his victories and lays it down at his Father's feet. Let us joy in his joy, and our joy shall be full.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 20. Put them in fear, O Lord,** etc. We should otherwise think ourselves gods. We are so inclined to sin that we need strong restraints, and so swelled with a natural pride against God, that we need thorns in the flesh to let out the corrupt matter. The constant hanging the rod over us makes us lick the dust, and acknowledge ourselves to be altogether at the Lord's mercy. Though God hath pardoned us, he will make us wear the halter about our necks to humble us. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 20. That the nations may know themselves to be but men.** The original word is (Heb.), *enosh;* and therefore it is a prayer that they may know themselves to be but miserable, frail, and dying men. The word is in the singular number, but it is used collectively. *John Calvin.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 20.** A needful lesson, and how it is taught.

**÷PSALM 11**

**SUBJECT.** Charles Simeon gives an excellent summary of this Psalm in the following sentences: — "The Psalms are a rich repository of experimental knowledge. David, at the different periods of his life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, whether rich or poor, can be placed; in these heavenly compositions he delineates all the workings of the heart. He introduces, too, the sentiments and conduct of the various persons who were accessory either to his troubles or his joys; and thus sets before us a compendium of all that is passing in the hearts of men throughout the world. When he penned this Psalm he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life, and hunted him `as a partridge upon the mountains.' His timid friends were alarmed for his safety, and recommended him to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding place, and thus to conceal himself from the rage of Saul. But David, being strong in faith, spurned the idea of resorting to any such pusillanimous expedients, and determined confidently to repose his trust in God."

To assist us to remember this short, but sweet Psalm, we will give it the name of "THE SONG OF THE STEADFAST."

**DIVISION.** From **Ps 11:1-3**, David describes the temptation with which he was assailed, and from **Ps 11:4-7**, the arguments by which his courage was sustained.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** These verses contain an account of a temptation to distrust God, with which David was, upon some unmentioned occasion, greatly exercised. It may be, that in the days when he was in Saul's court, he was advised to flee at a time when this flight would have been charged against him as a breach of duty to the king, or a proof of personal cowardice. His case was like that of Nehemiah, when his enemies, under the garb of friendship, hoped to entrap him by advising him to escape for his life. Had he done so, they could then have found a ground of accusation. Nehemiah bravely replied, "Shall such a man as I flee?" and David, in a like spirit, refuses to retreat, exclaiming,

**In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird** **to your mountain?** When Satan cannot overthrow us by presumption, how craftily will he seek to ruin us by distrust! He will employ our dearest friends to argue us out of our confidence, and he will use such plausible logic, that unless we once for all assert our immovable trust in Jehovah, he will make us like the timid bird which flies to the mountain whenever danger presents itself.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Whole Psalm.** The most probable account of the occasion of this Psalm is that given by Amyraldus. He thinks it was composed by David while he was in the court of Saul, at a time when the hostility of the king was beginning to show itself, and before it had broken out into open persecution. David's friends, or those professing to be so, advised him to flee to his native mountains for a time, and remain in retirement, till the king should show himself more favourable. David does not at that time accept the counsel, though afterwards he seems to have followed it. This Psalm applies itself to the establishment of the church against the calumnies of the world and the compromising counsel of man, in that confidence which is to be placed in God the Judge of all. *W. Wilson, D.D., in loc.,* 1860.

**Whole Psalm.** If one may offer to make a modest conjecture, it is not improbable this Psalm might be composed on the sad murder of the priests by Saul (**1Sa 22:19**), when after the slaughter of Abimelech, the high priest, Doeg, the Edomite, by command from Saul, "slew in one day fourscore and five persons which wore a linen ephod." I am not so carnal as to build the spiritual church of the Jews on the material walls of the priests' city at Nob (which then by Doeg was smitten with the edge of the sword), but this is most true, that "knowledge must preserve the people; "and (**Mal 2:7**), "The priests' lips shall preserve knowledge; "and then it is easy to conclude, what an earthquake this massacre might make in the *foundations of* *religion.* *Thomas Fuller.*

**Whole Psalm.** Notice how remarkably the whole Psalm corresponds with the deliverance of Lot from Sodom. This verse, with the angel's exhortation, "Escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed, "and Lot's reply, "I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil take me and I die." **Ge 19:17-19.** And again, *"The Lord's seat is in* *heaven, and upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire, brimstone, storm and tempest, "*with "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven:" and again *"His* *countenance will behold the thing that is just, "*with "Delivered just Lot... for that righteous man vexed his righteous soul with their ungodly deeds." **2Pe 2:7-8.** *Cassidorus* (A.D., 560) *in John Mason Neal's "Commentary on the* *Psalms, from Primitive and Medieval Writers, "1860.*

**Whole Psalm.** The combatants at the Lake Thrasymene are said to have been so engrossed with the conflict that neither party perceived the convulsions of nature that shook the ground—

"An earthquake reeled unheedingly away, None felt stern nature rocking at his feet."

From a nobler cause, it is thus with the soldiers of the Lamb. They believe, and, therefore, make no haste; nay, they can scarcely be said to feel earth's convulsions as other men, because their eager hope presses forward to the issue at the advent of the Lord. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Ver. 1.** I trust in the Lord: how do ye say to my soul, Swerve on to your mountain like a bird? (others, *"O thou bird."*) Saul and his adherents mocked and jeered David with such taunting speeches, as conceiving that he knew no other shift or refuge, but so betaking himself unto wandering and lurking on the mountains; hopping, as it were, from one place to another like a silly bird; but they thought to ensnare and take him well enough for all that, not considering God who was David's comfort, rest and refuge. *Theodore Haak's "Translation of the Dutch Annotations, as ordered* *by the Synod of Dort, in* 1618." London, 1657.

**Ver. 1. With Jehovah I have taken shelter; how say ye to my soul, Flee, sparrows, to your hill?** *"Your hill, "*that hill from which you say your help cometh: a sneer. Repair to that boasted hill, which may indeed give you the help which it gives the sparrow: a shelter against the inclemencies of a stormy sky, no defence against our power. *Samuel Horsley, in loc.*

**Ver. 1. In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as** **a bird to your mountain?** The holy confidence of the saints in the hour of great trial is beautifully illustrated by the following ballad which Anne Askew, who was burned at Smithfield in 1546, made and sang when she was in Newgate: —

Like as the armed knight, | On thee my care I cast,  
Appointed to the field, | For all their cruel spite:  
With this world will I fight, | I set not by their haste;  
And Christ shall be my shield.| For thou art my delight.  
|

Faith is that weapon strong, | I am not she that list  
Which will not fail at need: | My anchor to let fall  
My foes, therefore, among, | For every drizzling mist,  
Therewith will I proceed. | My ship substantial.

As it is had in strength | Not oft use I to write,  
And force of Christe's way, | In prose, nor yet in rhyme;  
It will prevail at length, | Yet will I shew one sight  
Though all the devils say nay.| That I saw in my time.

Faith in the fathers old | I saw a royal throne,  
Obtained righteousness; | Where justice should have sit,  
Which makes me very bold | But in her stead was one  
To fear no world's distress. | Of moody, cruel wit.

I now rejoice in heart, | Absorbed was righteousness,  
And hope bids me do so; | As of the raging flood:  
For Christ will take my part, | Satan, in his excess,  
And ease me of my woe. | Sucked up the guiltless blood.

Thou sayest Lord, whoso knock, | Then thought I, Jesus Lord,  
To them wilt thou attend: | When thou shall judge us all,  
Undo therefore the lock, | Hard it is to record  
And thy strong power send. | On these men what will fall.

More enemies now I have | Yet, Lord, I thee desire,  
Than hairs upon my head: | For that they do to me,  
Let them not me deprave, | Let them not taste the hire  
But fight thou in my stead. | Of their iniquity.

**Ver. 1. How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?** We may observe, that David is much pleased with the metaphor in frequently comparing himself to a bird, and that of several sorts: first, to an eagle (**Ps 103:5**), "My youth is renewed like the eagle's; " sometimes to an owl (**Ps 102:6**), "I am like an owl in the desert; " sometimes to a pelican, in the same verse, "Like a pelican in the wilderness; "sometimes to a sparrow (**Ps 102:7**), "I watch, and am as a sparrow; "sometimes to a partridge, "As when one doth hunt a partridge." I cannot say that he doth compare himself to a dove, but he would compare himself (**Ps 55:6**), "O that I had the wings of a dove, for then I would flee away and be at rest." Some will say, How is it possible that birds of so different a feather should all so fly together as to meet in the character of David? To whom we answer, That no two men can more differ one from another, that the same servant of God at several times differeth from himself. David in prosperity, when commanding, was like an *eagle;* in adversity, when contemned, like an *owl;* in devotion, when retired, like a *pelican;* in solitariness, when having no company, (of *Saul*), like a *partridge.* This general metaphor of a *bird*, which David so often used on himself, his enemies in the first verse of this Psalm used on him, though not particularising the kind thereof: *"Flee as a* *bird to your mountain; "*that is, speedily betake thyself to thy God, in whom you hope for succour and security.

Seeing this counsel was both good in itself, and good at this time, why doth David seem so angry and displeased thereat? Those his words, *"Why say you to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?"* import some passion, at leastways, a disgust of the advice. It is answered, David was not offended with the counsel, but with the manner of the propounding thereof. His enemies did it ironically in a gibing, jeering way, as if his flying thither were to no purpose, and he unlikely to find there the safety he sought for. However, David was not hereby put out of conceit with the counsel, beginning this Psalm with this his firm resolution, **In the Lord put I my trust: how say** **ye then to my soul,** etc. Learn we from hence, when men give us good counsel in a jeering way, let us take the counsel, and practice it; and leave them the jeer to be punished for it. Indeed, corporal cordials may be envenomed by being wrapped up in poisoned papers; not so good spiritual advice where the good matter receives no infection from the ill manner of the delivery thereof. Thus, when the chief priests mocked our Saviour (**Mt 27:43**), "He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him." Christ trusted in God never a whit the less for the fleere and flout which their profaneness was pleased to bestow upon him. Otherwise, if men's mocks should make us to undervalue good counsel, we might in this age be mocked out of our God, and Christ, and Scripture, and heaven; the apostle Jude, (**Jude 1:18**), having foretold that in the last times there should be mockers, walking after their own lusts. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 1.** It is as great an offence to make a new, as to deny the true God. **In the Lord put I my trust;** how then **say ye unto** **my soul** (ye seducers of souls), *"that she should fly unto the* *mountains as a bird; "*to seek unnecessary and foreign helps, as if the Lord alone were not sufficient? "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and he that delivereth me, my God, and my strength; in him will I trust: my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be safe from mine enemies." "Whom have I in heaven but thee, "amongst those thousands of angels and saints, what Michael or Gabriel, what Moses or Samuel, what Peter, what Paul? "and there is none in earth that I desire in comparison of thee." *John King,* 1608.

**Ver. 1.** In temptations of inward trouble and terror, it is not convenient to dispute the matter with Satan. David in **Ps 42:11**, seems to correct himself for his mistake; his soul was cast down within him, and for the cure of that temptation, he had prepared himself by arguments for a dispute; but perceiving himself in a wrong course, he calls off his soul from disquiet to an immediate application to God and the promises, "Trust still in God, for I shall yet praise him; "but here he is more aforehand with his work; for while his enemies were acted by Satan to discourage him, he rejects the temptation at first, before it settled upon his thoughts, and chaseth it away as a thing that he would not give ear to. **In the Lord put I my trust: how say** **ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?** And there are weighty reasons that should dissuade us from entering the lists with Satan in temptation of inward trouble. *Richard Gilpin.*

**Ver. 1.** The shadow will not cool except in it. What good to have the shadow though of a mighty rock, when we sit in the open sun? To have almighty power engaged for us, and we to throw ourselves out of it, by bold sallies in the mouth of temptation! The saints' falls have been when they have run out of their trench and stronghold; for, like the conies, they are a weak people in themselves, and their strength lies in the rock of God's almightiness, which is their habitation. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 1.** The saints of old would not accept deliverances on base terms. They scorned to fly away for the enjoyment of rest except it were with the wings of a dove, covered with silver innocence. As willing were many of the martyrs to die as to dine. The tormentors were tired in torturing Blandina. "We are ashamed, O Emperor! The Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the more resolute, "said one of Julian's nobles. This the heathen counted obstinacy; but they knew not the power of the Spirit, nor the secret armour of proof, which saints wear about their hearts. *John Trapp.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 1.** Faith's bold avowal, and brave refusal.

**Ver. 1.** Teacheth us to trust in God, how great soever our dangers be; also that we shall be many times assaulted to make us put far from us this trust, but yet that we must cleave unto it, as the anchor of our souls, sure and steadfast. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**Ver. 1.** The advice of cowardice, and the jeer of insolence, both answered by faith. Lesson— Attempt no other answer.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** How forcibly the case is put! The bow is bent, the arrow is fitted to the string: "Flee, flee, thou defenceless bird, thy safety lies in flight; begone, for thine enemies will send their shafts into thy heart; haste, haste, for soon wilt thou be destroyed!" David seems to have felt the force of the advice, for it came home *to his soul;* but yet he would not yield, but would rather dare the danger than exhibit a distrust in the Lord his God. Doubtless the perils which encompassed David were great and imminent; it was quite true that his enemies were *ready* to *shoot privily* at him;

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 2. For, lo, the wicked bend their bow,** etc. This verse presents an unequal combat betwixt *armed power, advantaged with* *policy,* on the one side; and *naked innocence* on the other. First, *armed power: "They bend their bows, and make ready their* *arrows, "*being all the artillery of that age; secondly, *advantaged with policy: "that they may privily shoot, "*to surprise them with an ambush unawares, probably pretending amity and friendship unto them; thirdly, *naked innocence:* if innocence may be termed naked, which is its own armour; *"at the upright in heart."* *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 2. For, lo, the ungodly bend their bow, and make ready their** **arrows within the quiver: that they may privily shoot at them which** **are true of heart.** The plottings of the chief priests and Pharisees that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him. They bent their bow, when they hired Judas Iscariot for the betrayal of his Master; they made ready their arrows within the quiver when they sought "false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death." **Mt 26:59**. *"Them which are true of heart."* Not alone the Lord himself, the only true and righteous, but his apostles, and the long line of those who should faithfully cleave to him from that time to this. And as with the Master, so with the servants: witness the calumnies and the revilings that from the time of Joseph's accusation by his mistress till the present day, have been the lot of God's people. *Michael Ayguan,* 1416, *in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

**Ver. 2. That they may secretly shoot at them which are upright in** **heart.** They bear not their bows and arrows as scarecrows in a garden of cucumbers, to fray, but *to shoot,* not at stakes, but men; their arrows are *jacula mortifera* (**Ps 7:2**), deadly arrows, and lest they should fail to hit, they take advantage of the dark, of privacy and secrecy; they shoot *privily.* Now this is the covenant of hell itself. For what created power in the earth is able to dissolve that work which *cruelty* and *subtlety,* like Simeon and Levi, brothers in evil, are combined and confederate to bring to pass? Where subtlety is ingenious, insidious to invent, cruelty barbarous to execute, subtlety giveth counsel, cruelty giveth the stroke. Subtlety ordereth the time, the place, the means, accommodates, concinnates circumstances; cruelty undertakes the act: subtlety hideth the knife, cruelty cutteth the throat: subtlety with a cunning head layeth the ambush, plotteth the train, the stratagem; and cruelty with as savage a heart, sticketh not at the most dreadful, most direful objects, ready to wade up to the ankles, the neck, in a whole red sea of human, yea, country blood: how fearful is their plight that are thus assaulted! *John King.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 2.** The craftiness of our spiritual enemies.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 3.** It was equally correct that the very *foundations* of law and justice were *destroyed* under Saul's unrighteous government: but what were all these things to the man whose trust was in God alone? He could brave the dangers, could escape the enemies, and defy the injustice which surrounded him. His answer to the question, "What can the righteous do?" would be the counter question, "What cannot they do?" When prayer engages God on our side, and when faith secures the fulfilment of the promise, what cause can there be for flight, however cruel and mighty our enemies? With a sling and a stone, David had smitten a giant before whom the whole hosts of Israel were trembling, and the Lord, who delivered him from the uncircumcised Philistine, could surely deliver him from King Saul and his myrmidons. There is no such word as "impossibility" in the language of faith; that martial grace knows how to fight and conquer, but she knows not how to flee.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?** But now we are met with a giant objection, which with Goliath must be removed, or else it will obstruct our present proceedings. Is it possible that the *foundations of religion* should be destroyed? Can God be in so long a sleep, yea, so long a lethargy, as patiently to permit the ruins thereof? If he looks on, and yet doth not see these *foundations* when destroyed, where then is his *omniscience?* If he seeth it, and cannot help it, where then is his *omnipotence?* If he seeth it, can help it, and will not, where then is his *goodness* and *mercy?* Martha said to Jesus (**Joh 11:21**), "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But many will say, Were God effectually present in the world with his aforesaid attributes, surely the *foundations* had not *died,* had not been *destroyed*. We answer negatively, that it is impossible that the *foundations* of religion should ever be *totally* and *finally destroyed,* either in relation to the church in general, or in reference to every true and lively member thereof. For the first, we have an express promise of Christ. **Mt 16:18.** "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Fundamenta tamen stant inconcussa Sionis*. And as for every particular Christian (**2Ti 2:19**), "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." However, though for the reasons aforementioned in the objections (the inconsistency thereof with the attributes of God's omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness), the *foundations* can never totally and finally, yet may they partially be destroyed, *quoad gradum,* in a fourfold degree, as followeth. First, *in the desires and utmost* *endeavours of wicked men,*

1. *Hoc velle,* They bring their— 2. *Hoc agere,*

3. *Totum posse.*

If they *destroy* not the foundations, it is no thanks to them, seeing all the world will bear them witness they have done *their best* (that is, *their worst*), what their might and malice could perform. Secondly, *in their own vainglorious imaginations:* they may not only vainly boast, but also verily believe that they have *destroyed the* *foundations.* Applicable to this purpose, is that high rant of the Roman emperor (**Lu 2:1**): "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." All the world! whereas he had, though much, not all in Europe, little in Asia, less in Africa, none in America, which was so far from being conquered, it was not so much as known to the Romans. But *hyperbole* is not a figure, but the ordinary language of pride; because indeed Augustus had very much he proclaimeth himself to have all the world... Thirdly, *the foundations may be destroyed* as to all outward visible illustrious apparition. The church in persecution is like unto a ship in a tempest; down go all their masts, yea, sometimes for the more speed they are forced to cut them down: not a piece of canvas to play with the winds, no sails to be seen; they lie close knotted to the very keel, that the tempest may have the less power upon them, though when the storm is over, they can hoist up their sails as high, and spread their canvas as broad as ever before. So the church in the time of persecution *feared*, but especially *felt,* loseth all gayness and gallantry which may attract and allure the eyes of beholders, and contents itself with its own secrecy. In a word, on the work days of affliction she weareth her worst clothes, whilst her best are laid up in her wardrobe, in sure and certain hope that God will give her a *holy* and *happy day,* when with joy she shall wear her best garments. Lastly, they may be *destroyed* in the *jealous* *apprehensions* of the best saints and servants of God, especially in their melancholy fits. I will instance in no puny, but in a star of the first magnitude and greatest eminency, even Elijah himself complaining (**1Ki 19:10**): "And I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3. If.** It is the only word of comfort in the text, that what is said is not *positive, but suppositive;* not thetical, but hypothetical. And yet this comfort which is but a spark (at which we would willingly kindle our hopes), is quickly saddened with a double consideration. First, impossible suppositions produce impossible consequences, "As is the mother, so is the daughter." Therefore, surely God's Holy Spirit would not suppose such a thing but what was feasible and possible, but what either had, did, or might come to pass. Secondly, the Hebrew word is not the conditional *im, si, si forte*, but *chi, quia, quoniam,* because, and (although here it be favourably rendered *if*), seemeth to import, more therein, that the sad case had already happened in David's days. I see, therefore, that this *if,* our only hope in the text, is likely to prove with Job's friends, but a miserable comforter. Well, it is good to know the worst of things, that we may provide ourselves accordingly; and therefore let us behold this doleful case, not as doubtful, but as done; not as feared, but felt; not as suspected, but at this time really come to pass. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3. If the foundations,** etc. My text is an answer to a tacit objection which some may raise; namely, that the righteous are wanting to themselves, and by their own easiness and inactivity (not daring and doing so much as they might and ought), betray themselves to that bad condition. In whose defence David shows, that if God in his wise will and pleasure seeth it fitting, for reasons best known to himself, to suffer religion to be reduced to terms of extremity, it is not placed in the power of the best man alive to remedy and redress the same. *"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* My text is hung about with *mourning,* as for a funeral sermon, and contains: First, a sad case supposed, *"If the foundations be* *destroyed."* Secondly, a sad question propounded, *"What can the righteous do?"* Thirdly, a sad answer implied, namely, that they can do just nothing, as to that point of reestablishing the destroyed foundation. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3. If the foundations be destroyed,** etc. The civil foundation of a nation or people, is their laws and constitutions. The order and power that's among them, that's the foundation of a people; and when once this foundation is destroyed, **What can the righteous do?** What can the best, the wisest in the world, do in such a case? What can any man do, if there be not a foundation of government left among men? There is no help nor answer in such a case but that which follows in the fourth verse of the Psalm, *"The Lord is in his holy temple, the* *Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the* *children of men; "*as if he had said, in the midst of these confusions, when as it is said (**Ps 82:5**), "All the foundations of the earth are out of course; "yet God keeps his course still, he is where he was and as he was, without variableness or shadow of turning. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 3. The righteous.** The righteous indefinitely, equivalent to the righteous universally; not only the righteous as a single arrow, but in the whole sheaf; not only the righteous in their personal, but in their diffusive capacity. Were they all collected into one body, were all the righteous living in the same age wherein the *foundations* *are destroyed,* summoned up and modelled into one corporation, all their joint endeavours would prove ineffectual to the reestablishing of the fallen *foundations,* as not being man's work, but only God's work to perform. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3. The foundations.** *Positions,* the things formerly fixed, placed, and settled. It is not said, if the roof be ruinous, or if the side walls be shattered, but if the *foundations.*

**Ver. 3. Foundations be destroyed.** In the plural. Here I will not warrant my skill in architecture, but conceive this may pass for an undoubted truth: it is possible that a building settled on several entire *foundations* (suppose them *pillars*) close one to another, if one of them fall, yet the structure may still stand, or rather hang (at the least for a short time) by virtue of the *complicative*, which it receiveth from such foundations which still stand secure. But in case there be a total rout, and an utter ruin of all the *foundations,* none can fancy to themselves a possibility of that building's subsistence. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3. What CAN the righteous?** The *can* of the righteous is a limited *can,* confined to the rule of God's word; they *can* do nothing but what they *can* lawfully do. **2Co 13:8**. "For we *can* do nothing against the truth, but for the truth:" *Illud* *possumus, quod jure possumus.* Wicked men can do anything; their conscience, which is so wide that it is none at all, will bear them out to act anything how unlawful soever, to stab, poison, massacre, by any means, at any time, in any place, whosoever standeth betwixt them and the effecting of their desires. Not so the righteous; they have a rule whereby to walk, which they will not, they must not, they dare not, cross. If therefore a righteous man were assured, that by the breach of one of God's commandments he might restore decayed religion, and resettle it *statu quo prius,* his hands, head, and heart are tied up, he *can* do nothing, because *their damnation is just who say* (**Ro 3:8**), *"Let us do evil that good may come thereof."*

**Ver. 3. Do.** It is not said, *What can they think?* It is a great blessing which God hath allowed injured people, that though otherwise oppressed and straitened, they may freely enlarge themselves in their thoughts. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 3.** Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times: this sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord. **Ezr 9:1-15**. And Jeremiah tells the wicked of his degenerate age, that "his soul should weep in secret places for their pride." **Jer 13:17**. Indeed, sometimes sin comes to such a height, that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner, and bewail the general pollutions of the age. *"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* Such dismal days of national confusion our eyes have seen, when foundations of government were destroyed, and all hurled into military confusion. When it is thus with a people, *"What can the righteous* *do?"* Yes, this they may, and should do, "fast and pray." There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God, as the words following hint: *"The Lord* *is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; "*in which words God is presented sitting in heaven as a temple, for their encouragement, I conceive, in such a desperate state of affairs, to direct their prayers thither for deliverance. And certainly this hath been the engine that hath been instrumental, above any, to restore this poor nation again, and set it upon the foundation of that lawful government from which it had so dangerously departed. *William Gurnall.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 3.** This may furnish a double discourse.

1. *If God's oath and promise could remove*, what could we do? Here the answer is easy.

2. *If all earthly things fail*, and the very State fall to pieces, what can we do? We can suffer joyfully, hope cheerfully, wait patiently, pray earnestly, believe confidently, and triumph finally.

**Ver. 3.** Necessity of holding and preaching foundation truths.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 4.** David here declares the great source of his unflinching courage. He borrows his light from heaven— from the great central orb of deity. The God of the believer is never far from him; he is not merely the God of the mountain fastnesses, but of the dangerous valleys and battle plains.

**Jehovah is in his holy temple.** The heavens are above our heads in all regions of the earth, and so is the Lord ever near to us in every state and condition. This is a very strong reason why we should not adopt the vile suggestions of distrust. There is one who pleads his precious blood in our behalf in the temple above, and there is one upon the throne who is never deaf to the intercession of his Son. Why, then, should we fear? What plots can men devise which Jesus will not discover? Satan has doubtless desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but Jesus is in the temple praying for us, and how can our faith fail? What attempts can the wicked make which Jehovah shall not behold? And since he is in his holy temple, delighting in the sacrifice of his Son, will he not defeat every device, and send us a sure deliverance?

**Jehovah's throne is in the heavens;** he reigns supreme. Nothing can be done in heaven, or earth, or hell, which he doth not ordain and overrule. He is the world's great Emperor. Wherefore, then, should we flee? If we trust this King of kings, is not this enough? Cannot he deliver us without our cowardly retreat? Yes, blessed be the Lord our God, we can salute him as Jehovahnissi; in his name we set up our banners, and instead of flight, we once more raise the shout of war.

**His eyes behold.** The eternal Watcher never slumbers; his eyes never know a sleep.

**His eyelids try the children of men:** he narrowly inspects their actions, words, and thoughts. As men, when intently and narrowly inspecting some very minute object, almost close their eyelids to exclude every other object, so will the Lord look all men through and through. God sees each man as much and as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; he never removes his eye from us; he sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancings of the eye. Is not this a sufficient ground of confidence, and an abundant answer to the solicitations of despondency? My danger is not hid from him; he knows my extremity, and I may rest assured that he will not suffer me to perish while I rely alone on him. Wherefore, then, should I take wings of a timid bird, and flee from the dangers which beset me?

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 4.** The infinite understanding of God doth exactly know the sins of men; he knows so as to consider. He doth not only know them, but intently behold them: **His eyelids try the children of men,** a metaphor taken from men, that contract the eyelids when they would wistly and accurately behold a thing: it is not a transient and careless look. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 4. His eyes behold,** etc. God searcheth not as man searcheth, by enquiring into that which before was hid from him; his searching is no more but his beholding; he seeth the heart, he beholdeth the reins; God's very sight is searching. **Heb 4:13**. "All things are naked, and opened unto his eyes, "tetrachlidmena, *dissected or anatomised*. He hath at once as exact a view of the most hidden things, the very entrails of the soul, as if they had been with never so great curiosity anatomised before him. *Richard Alleine,* 1611-1681.

**Ver. 4. His eyes behold,** etc. Consider that God not only sees into all you do, but he sees it to that very end that he may examine and search into it. He doth not only behold you with a common and indifferent look, but with a searching, watchful, and inquisitive eye: he pries into the reasons, the motives, the ends of all your actions. **The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.** **Re 1:14**, where Christ is described, it is said, *his eyes are as a flame of fire:* you know the property of fire is to search and make trial of those things which are exposed unto it, and to separate the dross from the pure metal: so, God's eye is like fire, to try and examine the actions of men: he knows and discerns how much your very purest duties have in them of mixture, and base ends of formality, hypocrisy, distractedness, and deadness: he sees through all your specious pretences, that which you cast as a mist before the eyes of men when yet thou art but a juggler in religion: all your tricks and sleights of outward profession, all those things that you use to cozen and delude men withal, cannot possibly impose upon him: he is a God that can look through all those fig leaves of outward profession, and discern the nakedness of your duties through them. *Ezekiel Hopkins, D.D.*

**Ver. 4. His eyes behold,** etc. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 4. His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.** When an offender, or one accused for any offence, is brought before a judge, and stands at the bar to be arraigned, the judge looks upon him, eyes him, sets his eye upon him, and he bids the offender look up in his face: "Look upon me, "saith the judge, "and speak up:" guiltiness usually clouds the forehead and clothes the brow; the weight of guilt holds down the head! *the evil doer hath an ill look,* or dares not look up; how glad is he if the judge looks off him. We have such an expression here, speaking of the Lord, the great Judge of heaven and earth: *"His eyelids try the children of men, "*as a judge tries a guilty person with his eye, and reads the characters of his wickedness printed in his face. Hence we have a common speech in our language, such a one *looks suspiciously,* or, *he hath a guilty look.* At that great gaol delivery described in **Re 6:16**, All the prisoners cry out *to be hid from the face of him that sat upon the throne.* They could not look upon Christ, and they could not endure Christ should look upon them; the eyelids of Christ try the children of men... Wickedness cannot endure to be under the observation of any eye much less of the eye of justice. Hence the actors of it say, "*Who seeth* *us?"* It is very hard not to show the guilt of the heart in the face, and it is as hard to have it seen there. *Joseph Caryl.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 4.** The elevation, mystery, supremacy, purity, everlastingness, invisibility, etc., of the throne of God.

**Ver. 4-5.** In these verses mark the fact that the children of men, as well as the righteous, are tried; work out the contrast between the two trials in their designs and results, etc.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous:** he doth not hate them, but only tries them. They are precious to him, and therefore he refines them with afflictions. None of the Lord's children may hope to escape from trial, nor, indeed, in our right minds, would any of us desire to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings.

"It is my happiness below

Not to live without the cross;

But the Saviour's power to know,

Sanctifying every loss."

"Trials make the promise sweet;

Trials give new life to prayer; Trials bring me to his feet—

Lay me low, and keep me there."

"Did I meet no trials here—

No chastisement by the way— Might I not, with reason, fear

I should prove a cast away?"

"Bastards may escape the rod,

Sunk in earthly vain delight; But the true born child of God

Must not— would not, if he might." *William Cowper.*

Is not this a very cogent reason why we should not distrustfully endeavour to shun a trial? — for in so doing we are seeking to avoid a blessing.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous.** Except our sins, there is not such plenty of anything in all the world as there is of troubles which come from sin, as one heavy messenger came to Job after another. Since we are not in paradise, but in the wilderness, we must look for one trouble after another. As a bear came to David after a lion, and a giant after a bear, and a king after a giant, and Philistines after a king, so, when believers have fought with poverty, they shall fight with envy; when they have fought with envy, they shall fight with infamy; when the have fought with infamy, they shall fight with sickness; they shall be like a labourer who is never out of work. *Henry Smith.*

**Ver. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous.** Times of affliction and persecution will distinguish the precious from the vile, it will difference the counterfeit professor from the true. Persecution is a Christian's touchstone, it is a *lapis lydius* that will try what metal men are made of, whether they be silver or tin, gold or dross, wheat or chaff, shadow or substance, carnal or spiritual, sincere or hypocritical. Nothing speaks out more soundness and uprightness than a pursuing after holiness, even then when holiness is most afflicted, pursued, and persecuted in the world: to stand fast in fiery trials argues much integrity within. *Thomas Brooks.*

**Ver. 5.** Note the singular opposition of the two sentences. God hates the wicked, and therefore in contrast he loves the righteous; but it is here said that he tries them: therefore it follows that to try and to love are with God the same thing. *C.H.S.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 4-5.** In these verses mark the fact that the children of men, as well as the righteous, are tried; work out the contrast between the two trials in their designs and results, etc.

**Ver. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous.**

1. Who are tried?

2. What in them is tried? — Faith, love, etc.

3. In what manner? — Trials of every sort.

4. How long?

5. For what purpose?

**Ver. 5. His soul hateth.** The thoroughness of God's hatred of sin. Illustrate by providential judgments, threatenings, sufferings of the Surety, and the terrors of hell.

**Ver. 5.** The trying of the gold, and the sweeping out of the refuse.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 6. But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul** **hateth**: why, then, shall I flee from these wicked men? If God hateth them, I will not fear them. Haman was very great in the palace until he lost favour, but when the king abhorred him, how bold were the meanest attendants to suggest the gallows for the man at whom they had often trembled! Look at the black mark upon the faces of our persecutors, and we shall not run away from them. If God is in the quarrel as well as ourselves, it would be foolish to question the result, or avoid the conflict. Sodom and Gomorrah perished by a fiery hail, and by a brimstone shower from heaven; so shall all the ungodly. They may gather together like Gog and Magog to battle, but the Lord will rain upon them "an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone:" **Eze 38:22**. Some expositors think that in the term "horrible tempest, "there is in the Hebrew an allusion to that burning, suffocating wind, which blows across the Arabian deserts, and is known by the name of Simoom. "A burning storm, "Lowth calls it, while another great commentator reads it "wrath wind; "in either version the language is full of terrors. What a tempest will that be which shall overwhelm the despisers of God! Oh! what a shower will that be which shall pour out itself for ever upon the defenceless heads of impenitent sinners in hell! Repent, ye rebels, or this fiery deluge shall soon surround you. Hell's horrors shall be your inheritance, your entailed estate,

**the portion of your cup.** The dregs of that cup you shall wring out, and drink for ever. A drop of hell is terrible, but what must a full cup of torment be? Think of it— a cup of misery, but not a drop of mercy. O people of God, how foolish is it to fear the faces of men who shall soon be faggots in the fire of hell! Think of their end, their fearful end, and all fear of them must be changed into contempt of their threatenings, and pity for their miserable estate.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.** Snares to hold them; then if they be not delivered, follow fire and brimstone, and they cannot escape. This is the case of a sinner if he repent not; if God pardon not, he is in the snare of Satan's temptation, he is in the snare of divine vengeance; let him therefore cry aloud for his deliverance, that he may have his feet in a large room. The wicked lay snares for the righteous, but God either prevents them that their souls ever escape them, or else he subverts them: "The snares are broken and we are delivered." No snares hold us so fast as those of our own sins; they keep down our heads, and stoop us that we cannot look up: a very little ease they are to him that hath not a seared conscience. *Samuel Page,* 1646.

**Ver. 6. He shall rain snares.** As in hunting with the lasso, the huntsman casts a snare from above upon his prey to entangle its head or feet, so shall the Lord from above with many twistings of the line of terror, surround, bind, and take captive the haters of his law. *C.H.S.*

**Ver. 6. He shall rain snares,** etc. He shall rain upon them when they least think of it, even in the midst of their jollity, as rain falls on a fair day. Or, he shall rain down the vengeance when he sees good, for it rains not always. Though he defers it, yet it will rain. *William Nicholson, Bishop of Gloucester, in "David's Harp Strung* *and Tuned", 1662.*

**Ver. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest.** The strange dispensation of affairs in this world is an argument which doth convincingly prove that there shall be such a day wherein all the *involucra* and entanglements of providence shall be clearly unfolded. Then shall the riddle be dissolved, why God hath given this and that profane wretch so much wealth, and so much power to do mischief: is it not *that they might* *be destroyed for ever?* Then shall they be called to a strict account for all that plenty and prosperity for which they are now envied; and the more they have abused, the more dreadful will their condemnation be. Then it will be seen that God gave them not as mercies, but as *"snares."* It is said that God *"will rain on the wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:"* when he scatters abroad the desirable things of this world, riches, honours, pleasures, etc., then he rains *"snares"* upon them; and when he shall call them to an account for these things, then he will rain upon them *"fire and* *brimstone, and an horrible tempest"* of his wrath and fury. Dives, who caroused on earth, yet, in hell could not obtain so much as one poor drop of water to cool his scorched and flaming tongue: had not his excess and intemperance been so great in his life, his fiery thirst had not been so tormenting after death; and therefore, in that sad item that Abraham gives him (**Lu 16:25**), he bids him *"remember that* *thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise* *Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art* *tormented."* I look upon this as a most bitter and a most deserved sarcasm; upbraiding him for his gross folly, in making the trifles of this life his good things. Thou hast received thy good things, but now thou art tormented. Oh, never call Dive's purple and delicious fare *good things*, if they thus end in torments! Was it good for him to be wrapped in purple who is now wrapped in flames? Was it good for him to fare deliciously who was only thereby fatted up against the day of slaughter? *Ezekiel Hopkins.*

**Ver. 6. Snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall** **be the portion of their cup.** After the judgment follows the condemnation: prefigured as we have seen, by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. *"Snares:"* because the allurements of Satan in this life will be their worst punishments in the next; the fire of anger, the brimstone of impurity, the tempest of pride, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. *"This shall be their* *portion; "*compare it with the psalmist's own saying, "The Lord himself is the portion of my inheritance and my cup." **Ps 16:5**. *Cassidorus, in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

**Ver. 6. The portion of their cup.** Hebrew, the allotment of their cup. The expression has reference to the custom of distributing to each guest his mess of meat. *William French and George Skinner,* 1842.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 6. He shall rain.** Gracious rain and destroying rain.

**Ver. 6.** The portion of the impenitent.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 7.** The delightful contrast of the last verse is well worthy of our observation, and it affords another overwhelming reason why we should be stedfast, unmoveable, not carried away with fear, or led to adopt carnal expedients in order to avoid trial.

**For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.** It is not only his office to defend it, but his nature to love it. He would deny himself if he did not defend the just. It is essential to the very being of God that he should be just; fear not, then, the end of all your trials, but "be just, and fear not." God approves, and, if men oppose, what matters it?

**His countenance doth behold the upright.** We need never be out of countenance, for God countenances us. He observes, he approves, he delights in the upright. He sees his own image in them, an image of his own fashioning, and therefore with complacency he regards them. Shall we dare to put forth our hand unto iniquity in order to escape affliction? Let us have done with byways and short turnings, and let us keep to that fair path of right along which Jehovah's smile shall light us. Are we tempted to put our light under a bushel, to conceal our religion from our neighbours? Is it suggested to us that there are ways of avoiding the cross, and shunning the reproach of Christ? Let us not hearken to the voice of the charmer, but seek an increase of faith, that we may wrestle with principalities and powers, and follow the Lord, fully going without the camp, bearing his reproach. Mammon, the flesh, the devil, will all whisper in our ear, "Flee as a bird to your mountain; "but let us come forth and defy them all. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There is no room or reason for retreat. Advance! Let the vanguard push on! To the front! all ye powers and passions of our soul. On! on! in God's name, on! for "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 7.** That God may give grace without glory is intelligible; but to admit a man to communion with him in glory without grace, is not intelligible. It is not agreeable to God's holiness to make any inhabitant of heaven, and converse freely with him in a way of intimate love, without such a qualification of grace: **The righteous Lord** **loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright;** he looks upon him with a smiling eye, and therefore he cannot favourably look upon an unrighteous person; so that this necessity is not founded only in the command of God that we should be renewed, but in the very nature of the thing, because God, in regard to his holiness, cannot converse with an impure creature. God must change his nature, or the sinner's nature must be changed. There can be no friendly communion between two of different natures without the change of one of them into the likeness of the other. Wolves and sheep, darkness and light, can never agree. God cannot love a sinner as a sinner, because he hates impurity by a necessity of nature as well as a choice of will. It is as impossible for him to love it as to cease to be holy. *Stephen Charnock.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 7.** The Lord possesses righteousness as a personal attribute, loves it in the abstract, and blesses those who practise it.

**÷PSALM 119**

**TITLE.** There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is *THE LONGEST PSALM*, and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it. It equals in bulk twenty-two psalms of the average length of the Songs of Degrees. Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city which lieth four square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and is as weighty as it is bulky. Again and again have we cried while studying it, "Oh the depths!" Yet these depths are hidden beneath an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil of light, and hence only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look into it.

The Psalm is alphabetical. Eight stanzas commence with one letter, and then another eight with the next letter, and so the whole Psalm proceeds by octonaries quite through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Besides which, there are multitudes of appositions of sense, and others of those structural formalities with which the oriental mind is pleased, — formalities very similar to those in which our older poets indulged. The Holy Spirit thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the memory. He is often plain or elegant in his manner, but he does not disdain to be quaint or formal if thereby his design of instruction can be the more surely reached. He does not despise even contracted and artificial modes of speech, if by their use he can fix his teaching upon the mind. Isaac Taylor has worthily set forth the lesson of this fact: — "In the strictest sense this composition is *conditioned*;nevertheless in the highest sense is it an utterance of spiritual life; and in thus finding these seemingly opposed elements, intimated commingled as they are throughout this Psalm, a lesson full of meaning is silently conveyed lo those who shall receive it— that the conveyance of the things of God to the human spirit is in no way damaged or impeded, much less is it deflected or ciliated by its subjugation to loose modes of utterance which most of all bespeak their adaptation to the infancy and the childlike capacity of the recipient."

**AUTHOR.** The fashion among modern writers is, as far as possible, to take ever? Psalm from David. As the critics of this school are usually unsound in doctrine and unspiritual in tone, we gravitate in the opposite direction, from a natural suspicion of everything which comes from so unsatisfactory a quarter. We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our teacher called it "David's pocket book", and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this Psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil". After long reading an author one gets to know his style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea, that it is altogether his own.

**SUBJECT.** The one theme is the word of the Lord. The Psalmist sets his subject in many lights, and treats of it in divers ways, but he seldom omits to mention the word of the Lord in each verse under some one or other of the many names by which he knows it; and even if the name be not there, the subject is still heartily pursued in every stanza. He who wrote this wonderful song was saturated with those books of Scripture which he possessed. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple Christian in a farmhouse who had *meditated* the Bible through three times. This is precisely what this Psalmist had done, — he had gone past reading into meditation. Like Luther, David had shaken every fruit tree in God's garden, and gathered golden fruit therefrom. "The most, "says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is to be feared that we too often do the like. This is a miserable way of treating the pages of inspiration. May the Lord prevent us from repeating that sin while reading this priceless Psalm.

There is an evident growth in the subject matter. The earlier verses are of such a character as to lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. In every portion, however, it is the fruit of deep experience, careful observation, and earnest meditation. If David did not write in there must have lived another believer of exactly the same order of mind as David, and he must have addicted himself to Psalmody with equal ardour, and have been an equally hearty lover of Holy Writ.

Our best improvement of this sacred composition will come through getting our minds into intense sympathy with its subject. In order to this, we might do well to commit it to memory. Philip Henry's daughter wrote in her diary, "I have of late taken some pains to learn by heart Psalm 119, and have made some progress therein." She was a sensible, godly woman. Having done this, we should consider the fulness, certainty, clearness, and sweetness of the word of God, since by such reflections we are likely to be stirred up to a warm affection for it. What favoured beings are those to whom the Eternal God has written a letter in his own hand and style. What ardour of devotion, what diligence of composition can produce a worthy eulogium for the divine testimonies? If ever one such has fallen from the pen of man it is this 119th Psalm, which might well be called the holy soul's soliloquy before an open Bible.

This sacred ode is a little Bible, the Scriptures condensed, a mass of Bibline, Holy Writ rewritten in holy emotions and actions. Blessed are they who can read and understand these saintly aphorisms; they shall find golden apples in this true Hesperides, and come to reckon that this Psalm, like the whole Scripture which it praises, is a pearl island, or, better still, a garden of sweet flowers.

**NOTES RELATING TO THE PSALM AS A WHOLE**

Eulogium upon the whole Psalm. — This Psalm shines and shows itself among the rest,

*Velut inter ignes*

*Luna minores.* {1}

a star in the firmament of the Psalms, of the first and greatest magnitude. This will readily appear if you consider either the manner it is composed in, or the matter it is composed of. The manner it is composed in is very elegant. The matter it is composed of is very excellent.

1. The manner it is composed in is very elegant; full of art, rule, method theological matter in a logical manner, a spiritual alphabet framed and formed according to the Hebrew alphabet.

2. The matter it is composed of is very excellent; full of rare sublimities, deep mysteries, gracious activities, yea, glorious ecstasies. The Psalm is made up of three things, — (a) prayers, (b) praises, (c) protestations. Prayers to God; praises of God; protestations unto God. *Rev. W. Simmons*, in a sermon in the *"Morning Exercises"*, 1661.

*Eulogium.* This Psalm is called the Alphabet of Divine Love, the Paradise of all the Doctrines, the Storehouse of the Holy Spirit, the School of Truth, also the deep mystery of the Scriptures, where the whole moral discipline of all the virtues shines brightly. And as all moral instruction is delightsome, therefore this Psalm, because excelling in this kind of instruction, should be called delightsome, inasmuch as it surpasses the rest. The other Psalms, truly, as lesser stars shine somewhat; but this burns with the meridian heat of its full brightness, and is wholly resplendent With moral loveliness. *Johannes Paulus Palanterius*, 1600.

*Eulogium.* In our German version it has the appropriate inscription, "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God." *Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

*Eulogium.* It is recorded of the celebrated St. Augustine, who among his voluminous works left a Comment on the Book of Psalms, that he delayed to comment on this one till he had finished the whole Psalter; and then yielded only to the long and vehement urgency of his friends, "because", he says, "as often as I essayed to think thereon, it always exceeded the powers of my intent thought and the utmost grasp of my faculties". While one ancient father {2} entitles this Psalm "the perfection of teaching and instruction"; another {3} says that "it applies an all containing medicine to the varied spiritual diseases of men— sufficing to perfect those who long for perfect virtue, to rouse the slothful, to refresh the dispirited, and to set in order the relaxed"; to which might be added many like testimonies of ancient and modern commentators on it. *William De Burgh*, 1860.

*Eulogium.* In proportion as this Psalm seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener. *Augustine*, 354-480.

*Eulogium.* In Matthew Henry's "Account of the Life and Death of his father, Philip Henry, "he says: "Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures." He often said, "All grace grows as love to the word of God grows."

{1} And like the moon, the feebler fires among, "Conspicuous shines." — *Horace.*

{2} St. Hilary.

{3} Theodoret.

*Eulogium.* It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive— the 119th Psalm— has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God. *John Ruskin, in "Fors Clavigera".*

*Eulogium.* This Psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the Psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practise the sacred word. Moreover, this Psalm is in some sort a touchstone for the spiritual life of those who read it. The sentiments expressed in it perfectly harmonise with what the historical books and other Psalms teach concerning David's obedience and his zeal for God's glory. There are, however, within it words which breathe so elevated a piety, that they can have their full sense and perfect truthfulness only in the mouth of Him of whom the prophet king was the type. *From the French of Armand de Mestral*, 1856.

*Eulogium.* The 119th Psalm has been spoken of by a most distinguished living rationalistic critic (Professor Reuss) as "not poetry at all, but simply a litany— a species of chaplet." Such does not seem to be the opinion of the angels of God, and of the redeemed spirits, when that very poem supplies With the language of praise— the paean of victory, "Just and true are thy ways" (Re 15:3); the cry of the angel of the waters, "Thou art righteous, O Lord!" (Re 16:5); the voice of much people in heaven, "True and righteous are his judgments" (Re 19:2); what is this but the exclamation of him, whoever he may have been, who wrote the Psalm— "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Ps 119:137). *William Alexander*, in *"The Quiver"*, 1880.

*Incident.* In the midst of a London season; in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819; William Wilberforce writes in his Diary— "Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort". *William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms".* 1877.

*Incident.* George Wishart, the chaplain and biographer of "the great Marquis of Montrose, "as he was called, would have shared the fate of his illustrious patron but for the following singular expedient. When upon the scaffold, he availed himself of the custom of the times, which permitted the condemned to choose a Psalm to be sung. He selected the 119th Psalm, and before two thirds of the Psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and his life was preserved. It may not be out of place to add that the George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, above referred to, has been too often confounded with the godly martyr of the same name who lived and died a century previously. We only mention the incident because it has often been quoted as a singular instance of the providential escape of a saintly personage; whereas it was the very ingenious device of a person who, according to Woodrow, was more renowned for shrewdness than for sanctity. The length of this Psalm was sagaciously employed as the means of gaining time, and, happily, the expedient succeeded. *C.H.S.*

*Alphabetical Arrangement.* It is observed that the 119th Psalm is disposed according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to intimate that children, when they begin to learn their alphabet, should learn that Psalm. *Nathanael Hardy*, 1618-1670.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.* True it is that the verses indeed begin not either with the English or yet the Latin letters, but with the Hebrew, wherein David made and wrote this Psalm. The will and purpose of the Holy Ghost is to make us to feel and understand that the doctrine herein contained is not only set down for great clerks which have gone to school for ten or twenty years; but also for the most simple; to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance. From *Calvin's Twenty-two Sermons upon the 119th Psalm*, 1580.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.* There may be something more than fancy in the remark, that Christ's name, *"the Alpha and Omega"* — equivalent to declaring him all that which every letter of the alphabet could express— may have had a reference to the peculiarity of this Psalm, — a Psalm in which (with the exception of Ps 119:84, 122, exceptions that make the rule more marked) every verse speaks of God's revelation of himself to man. *Andrew A. Bonar*, 1859.

*Alphabetical Arrangement:* Origen says it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom; and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection.

*Alphabetical Arrangement.* That the unlearned reader may understand what is meant by the Psalm being alphabetical, we append the following specimen upon the section *Aleph*:

**A** blessing is on them that are undefiled in the way

and walk in the law of Jehovah;

**A** blessing is on them that keep his testimonies,

and seek him with their whole heart;

**A**lso on them that do no wickedness,

but walk in his ways.

**A** law hast thou given unto us,

that we should diligently keep thy commandments.

**A**h! Lord, that my ways were made so direct

that I might keep thy statutes!

**A**nd then shall I not be confounded.

While I have respect unto all thy commandments.

**A**s for me, I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart,

when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

**A**n eye will I have unto thy ceremonies,

O forsake me not utterly. — From *"The Psalms Chronologically Arranged By Four Friends".* 1867.

Continued...**See Psalms "Job 42:15"**

**Psalms 119:2\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies.** What! A second blessing? Yes, they are doubly blessed whose outward life is supported by an inward zeal for God's glory. In the first verse we had an undefiled way, and it was taken for granted that the purity in the way was not mere surface work, but was attended by the inward truth and life which comes of divine grace. Here that which was implied is expressed. Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections. God's word is his witness or testimony to grand and important truths which concern himself and our relation to him: this we should desire to know; knowing it, we should believe it; believing it, we should love it; and loving it, we should hold it fast against all comers. There is a doctrinal keeping of the word when we are ready to die for its defence, and a practical keeping of it when we actually live under its power. Revealed truth is precious as diamonds, and should be kept or treasured up in the memory and in the heart as jewels in a casket, or as the law was kept in the ark; this however is not enough, for it is meant for practical use, and therefore it must be kept or followed, as men keep to a path, or to a line of business. If we keep God's testimonies they will keep us; they will keep us right in opinion, comfortable in spirit, holy in conversation, and hopeful in expectation. If they were ever worth having, and no thoughtful person will question that, then they are worth keeping; their designed effect does not come through a temporary seizure of them, but by a persevering keeping of them: "in keeping of them there is great reward."

We are bound to keep with all care the word of God, because it is his testimonies. He gave them to us, but they are still his own. We are to keep them as a watchman guards his master's house, as a steward husbands his lord's goods, as a shepherd keeps his employer's flock. We shall have to give an account, for we are put in trust with the gospel, and woe to us if we be found unfaithful. We cannot fight a good fight, nor finish our course, unless we keep the faith. To this end the Lord must keep us: only those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation will ever be able to keep his testimonies. What a blessedness is therefore evidenced and testified by a careful belief in God's word, and a continual obedience thereunto. God has blessed them, is blessing them, and will bless them for ever. That blessedness which David saw in others he realized for himself, for in Ps 119:168 he says, "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies, "and in Ps 119:54-56 he traces his joyful songs and happy memories to this same keeping of the law, and he confesses, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." Doctrines which we teach to others we should experience for ourselves.

**And that seek him with the whole heart.** Those who keep the Lord's testimonies are sure to seek after himself. If his word is precious we may be sure that he himself is still more so. Personal dealing with a personal God is the longing of all those who have allowed the word of the Lord to have its full effect upon them. If we once really know the power of the gospel we must seek the God of the gospel. "O that I knew where I might find HIM, "will be our wholehearted cry. See the growth which these sentences indicate: first, in the way, then walking in it, then finding and keeping the treasure of truth, and to crown all, seeking after the Lord of the way himself. Note also that the further a soul advances in grace the more spiritual and divine are its longings: an outward walk does not content the gracious soul, nor even the treasured testimonies; it reaches out in due time after God himself, and when it in a measure finds him, still yearns for more of him, and seeks him still.

Seeking after God signifies a desire to commune with him more closely, to follow him more fully, to enter into more perfect union with his mind and will, to promote his glory, and to realize completely all that he is to holy hearts. The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox.

God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection. But the heart must not be divided with many objects if the Lord is to be sought by us. God is one, and we shall not know him till our heart is one. A broken heart need not be distressed at this, for no heart is so whole in its seeking after God as a heart which is broken, whereof every fragment sighs and cries after the great Father's face. It is the divided heart which the doctrine of the text censures, and strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken. When our whole heart seeks the holy God in Christ Jesus it has come to him of whom it is written, "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole."

That which the Psalmist admires in this verse he claims in the tenth, where he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee." It is well when admiration of a virtue leads to the attainment of it. Those who do not believe in the blessedness of seeking the Lord will not be likely to arouse their hearts to the pursuit, but he who calls another blessed because of the grace which he sees in him is on the way to gaining the same grace for himself.

If those who *seek* the Lord are blessed, what shall be said of those who actually dwell with him and know that he is theirs?

"To those who fall, how kind thou art!

How good to those who seek I

But what to those who find? Ah! this

Nor tongue nor pen can show:

The love of Jesus— what it is,

None but his loved ones know."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 2.** The doubling of the sentence, **Blessed... Blessed,** in the first verse and second, is to let us see the certainty of the blessing belonging to the godly. The word of God is as true in itself when it is once spoken, as when it is many times repeated: the repetition of it is for confirmation of our weak faith. That which Isaac spake of Jacob, — "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed, "is the most sure decree of God upon all his children. Satan would fain curse Israel, by the mouth of such as Balaam was; but he shall not be able to curse, because God hath blessed. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek** **him with the whole heart.** In the former verse a blessed man is described by the course of his actions, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way": in this verse he is described by the frame of his heart. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 2. Keep his testimonies.** The careful keeping in mind of God's testimonies is blessedness; for though there is a keeping of them in conversation mentioned in the former verse, here another thing is intimated diverse from the former; he that keepeth this plant or holy seed so that the devil cannot take it out of his heart, he is happy. The word here used signifieth such a careful custody as that is wherewith we use to keep tender plants. *Paul Bayne.*

**Ver. 2. Testimonies.** The notion by which the word of God is expressed is *"testimonies"*; whereby is intended the whole declaration of God's will in doctrines, commands, examples, threatenings, promises. The whole word is the testimony which God hath deposed for the satisfaction of the world about the way of their salvation. Now because the word of God branches itself into two parts, the law and the gospel, this notion may be applied to both. First, to the *law*, in regard whereof the ark was called "the ark of the testimony" (Ex 25:16), because the two tables were laid up in it. The *gospel* is also called the testimony, "the testimony of God concerning his Son." "To the law, and to the testimony" (Isa 8:20); where testimony seems to be distinguished from the law. The gospel is so called, because therein God hath testified how a man shall be pardoned, reconciled to God, and obtain a right to eternal life. We need a testimony in this case, because it is more unknown to us. The law was written upon the heart, but the gospel is a stranger. Natural light will discern something of the law, and pry into matters which are of a moral strain and concernment; but evangelical truths are a mystery, and depend upon the mere testimony of God concerning his Son. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 2. Testimonies.** The word of God is called his testimony, not only because it testifies his will concerning his service, but also his favour and goodwill concerning his own in Christ Jesus. If God's word were no more than a law, yet were we bound to obey it, because we are his creatures; but since it is also a testimony of his love, wherein as a father he witnesseth his favour towards his children, we are doubly inexcusable if we do not most joyfully embrace it. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 2. Blessed are they... that seek him with the whole heart.** He pronounces *"blessed"* not such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of his law, Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole Judge and Disposer of our life, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service. *John Calvin,* 1509-1564.

**Ver. 2. The whole heart.** Whosoever would have sound happiness must have a sound heart. So much sincerity as there is, so much blessedness there will be; and according to the degree of our hypocrisy, will be the measure of our misery. *Richard Greenham,* 1531-1591.

**Ver. 2-3.** Observe the verbs seek, do, walk, all making up the subject to whom the blessedness belongs. *Henry Hammond,* 1605-1660.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 2. — Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek** **him with the whole heart.**

1. *The sacred Quest*:"Seek him." He has been sought among the trees, the hills, the planets, the stars. He has been sought in his own defaced image, man. He has been sought amid the mysterious wheels of Providence. But these quests have often been prompted simply by intellect, or compelled by conscience, and have therefore resulted but in a cold faint light. He has been sought in the word which this psalm so highly extols, when it has led up the smoke covered and gleaming peaks of Sinai. It has been followed, when it has led beneath the olives of Gethsemane to witness a mysterious struggle in blood sweating and anguish; to Calvary, where, in the place of a skull, life and immortality are brought to light. The sacred quest but there begins.

2. *The Conduct of the Quest.* Seekers might be mistakenly dejected by so literal an interpretation of the "whole heart." We do not hesitate to say a stream is in its whole volume flowing towards sea while there are little side creeks in which the water eddies backward; or to say the tide is coming despite receding waves; or that spring is upon us despite hailstorm and biting wind. Indication of,

(a) Unity

(b) Intensity.

(c) Determination.

No one conducts this quest aright who is not prompted to or sustained in it by the gracious Spirit.

3. Blessedness both in the pursuit and issue.

(a) Blessedness in the bitterness of penitence. The

door handle touched by him drops of myrrh. The rising sun

sends kindling beams upon the highest peaks.

(b) Blessedness in the happy findings of salvation and

adoption.

(c) Blessedness in the perpetual pursuit. — *William Anderson, of Reading*, 1882.

**Ver. 2.** — The double blessing.

1. On keeping the testimonies.

2. On seeking the Lord.

**Ver. 2. — That seek him with the whole heart.**

1. Seek what? God himself. No peace until he is found.

2. Seek where? In his testimonies.

(a) By studying them.

(b) By keeping to them.

3. Seek how? With the Whole heart. — *George Rogers*.

**Ver. 2. — Seeking for God.**

1. The Psalmist's way of seeking God.

(a) He sought God with the heart. Only the heart can find

God. Sight fails.

"The scientific method" fails. All reason fails. Only love

and trust can succeed. Love sees much where all other

perception finds nothing. Faith generally goes with

discovery, and nowhere so much as in finding God.

(b) He sought God with all his heart.

(1) Half heartedness seldom finds anything worth

having.

(2) Half heartedness shows contempt for God.

(3) God will not reveal himself to

half heartedness. It would be putting the highest

premium possible upon indifference.

2. The Psalmist's plea in seeking God: "Let me not wander from thy commandments"

(a) God's commandments lead, presently, into his own

presence. If we take even the moral law, every one of the

ten commandments leads away from the world, and sin, into

that seclusion of holiness in which he hides. It is thus

with all the commandments of the Scriptures.

(b) The earnestness of the souls search for God becomes, in

itself, a plea with God that he will be found of us. God,

who loves importunity in prayer, loves it no less when it

takes the form of searching with all the heart. He who

seeks with all the heart finds special encouragement to

pray: "Let me not wander from thy commandments." — *F.G. Marchant.*

**Ver. 2. — That seek him.** We must remember six conditions required in them who would seek the Lord rightly.

1. We must seek him in Christ the Mediator. Joh 14:6.

2. We must seek him in truth. Jer 10:10 Joh 4:24 Ps 7:6.

3. We must seek him in holiness. 2Ti 2:19 Heb 12:14 1Jo 1:3.

4. We must seek him above all things and for himself.

5. We must seek him by the light of his own word.

6. We must seek him diligently and with perseverance, never resting till we find him, with the spouse in the Canticles. — *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 2,4-5,8. — Blessed are they that keep.** "Thou hast commanded; us to keep." "O that my ways were directed to keep." "I will keep." Blessedness of keeping God's precepts— displayed (Ps 119:2), commanded (Ps 119:4), for (Ps 119:5), resolved upon (Ps 119:8). — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:3\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 3. They also do no iniquity.** Blessed indeed would those men be of whom this could be asserted without reserve and without explanation: we shall have reached the region of pure blessedness when we altogether cease from sin. Those who follow the word of God do no iniquity, the rule is perfect, and if it be constantly followed no fault will arise. Life, to the outward observer, at any rate, lies much in doing, and he who in his doings never swerves from equity, both towards God and man, has hit upon the way of perfection, and we may be sure that his heart is right. See how a whole heart leads to the avoidance of evil, for the Psalmist says, "That seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity." We fear that no man can claim to be absolutely without sin, and yet we trust there are many who do not designedly, wilfully, knowingly, and continuously do anything that is wicked, ungodly, or unjust. Grace keeps the life righteous as to act even when the Christian has to bemoan the transgressions of the heart. Judged as men should be judged by their fellows, according to such just rules as men make for men, the true people of God do no iniquity: they are honest, upright, and chaste, and touching justice and morality they are blameless. Therefore are they happy.

**They walk in his ways.** They attend not only to the great main highway of the law, but to the smaller paths of the particular precepts. As they will perpetrate no sin of commission, so do they labour to be free from every sin of omission. It is not enough to them to be blameless, they wish also to be actively righteous. A hermit may escape into solitude that he may do no iniquity, but a saint lives in society that he may serve his God by walking in his ways. We must be positively as well as negatively right: we shall not long keep the second unless we attend to the first, for men will be walking one way or another, and if they do not follow the path of God's law they will soon do iniquity. The surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good. This verse describes believers as they exist among us: although they have their faults and infirmities, yet they hate evil, and will not permit themselves to do it; they love the ways of truth, right and true godliness, and habitually they walk therein. They do not claim to be absolutely perfect except in their desires, and there they are pure indeed, for they pant to be kept from all sin, and to be led into all holiness.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 3. They also do no iniquity.** If it be demanded here, How is it that they who walk in God's ways work no iniquity? Is there any man who lives, and sins not? And if they be not without sin, how then are they to be blessed? The answer is, as the apostle says of our knowledge, "We know but in part": so is it true of our felicity on earth, we are blessed but in a part. It is the happiness of angels that they never sinned; it is the happiness of triumphant saints, that albeit they have been sinners, yet now they sin no more; but the happiness of saints militant is, that our sins are forgiven us; and that albeit sin remains in us, yet it reigns not over us; it is done in us, but not by our allowance: "I do the evil which I would not." "Not I, but sin that dwells in me, "Ro 7:17.

To the *doing of iniquity*, these three things must concur; first, a purpose to do it; next, a delight in doing it; thirdly, a continuance in it; which three in God's children never concur; for in sins done in them by the old man, the new man makes his exceptions and protestations against them. It is not I, says he; and so far is he from delighting in them, that rather his soul is grieved with them; even as Lot, dwelling among the Sodomites, was vexed by hearing and seeing their unrighteous deeds. In a word, the children of God are rather sufferers of sin against their wills than actors of it with their wills: like men spiritually oppressed by the power of their enemy; for which they sigh and cry unto God. "Miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And in this sense it is that the apostle saith, "He who is born of God sinneth not" (1Jo 3:9). *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 3. They also do no iniquity.** The blessedness of those who walk in the law: they do— or have done— no wickedness: but walk— or have always walked— in his ways. Throughout the Psalm it may be noticed that sometimes the present tense is employed indicating present action: sometimes the perfect to indicate past and present time: Ps 119:10-11,13-14,21, 51-61,101-102,131,145,147. *The Speaker's Commentary,* 1873.

**Ver. 3. They also do no iniquity.** That is, they make not a trade and common practice thereof. Slip they do, through the infirmity of the flesh, and subtlety of Satan, and the allurements of the world; but they do not ordinarily and customably go forward in unlawful and sinful courses. In that the Psalmist setteth down this as a part (and not the least part neither) of blessedness, that *they work none* *iniquity, which walk in his ways*:the doctrine to be learned here is this, that it is a marvellous great prerogative to be freed from the bondage of sin. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 3. They do no iniquity.** All such as are renewed by grace, and reconciled to God by Christ Jesus; to these God imputeth no sin to condemnation, and in his account *they do no iniquity*. Notable is that which is said of David, "He kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was right in mine eyes" (1Ki 14:8). How can that be? We may trace David by his failings, they are upon record everywhere in the word; yet here a veil is drawn upon them; God laid them not to his charge. There is a double reason why their failings are not laid to their charge. *Partly, because* *of their general state*, they are in Christ, taken into favour through him, and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Ro 8:1), therefore particular errors and escapes do not alter their condition; which is not to be understood as if a man should not be humbled, and ask God pardon for his infirmities; no, for then they prove iniquities and they will lie upon record against him. It was a gross fancy of the Valentinians, who held that they were not defiled with sin, whatsoever they committed; though base and obscene persons, yet still they were as gold in the dirt. No, no, we are to recover ourselves by repentance, to sue out the favour of God. When David humbled himself, and had repented, then saith Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin" (2Sa 12:13). *Partly, too, because their* *bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise.* They set themselves to comply with God's will, to seek and serve the Lord, though they are clogged with many infirmities. A wicked man sinneth with deliberation and delight, his bent is to do evil, he makes "provision for lusts" (Ro 13:14), and "serves" them by a voluntary subjection (Tit 3:3). But those that are renewed by grace are not "debtors" to the flesh, they have taken another debt and obligation, which is to serve the Lord (Ro 8:12).

*Partly, too, because their general course and way is to do* *otherwise.* Everything works according to its form; the constant actions of nature are according to the kind. So the new creature, his constant operations are according to grace. A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours shows what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers the habit of his soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflowed, but marsh ground is drowned with every return of the tide. A child of God may be occasionally carried away, and act contrary to the inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome by the return of every temptation, it argues a habit of sin.

*And partly, because sin never carries sway completely, but it* *is opposed by dislikes and resistances of the new nature.* The children of God make it their business to avoid all sin, by watching, praying, mortifying: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Ps 39:1), and thus there is a resistance of the sin. God hath planted graces in their hearts, the fear of his Majesty, that works a resistance; and therefore there is not a full allowance of what they do. This resistance sometimes is more strong, then the temptation is overcome: "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" (Ge 39:9). Sometimes it is more weak, and then sin carries it, though against the will of the holy man: "The evil which I hate, that do I" (Ro 7:15,18). It is the evil which they hate; they protest against it; they are like men which are oppressed by the power of the enemy. And then there is a remorse after the sin: David's heart smote him. It grieves and shames them that they do evil. Tenderness goes with the new nature: Peter sinned foully, but he went out and wept bitterly. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 3.** They that have mortified their sins live in the contrary graces. Hence it is that the Psalmist saith, that **they work no** **iniquity, but walk in thy paths.** First, they crucify all their sins, *"they do no iniquity"*: secondly, as they do no iniquity, so they follow all the ways of God, contrary to that iniquity: as they *give up all* the ways of sin, so they *take up all* the ways of grace. It is a rule in divinity, that *grace takes not away nature* that is, grace comes not to take away a man's affections, but to take them up. *William Fenner,* 1600-1640.

**Ver. 3. They walk in his ways.** It reproves those that rest in negatives. As it was said of a certain emperor, he was rather not *vicious* than virtuous. Many men, all their religion runs upon *nots*:"I am not as this publican" (Lu 18:11). That ground is naught, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yields not good increase. Not only the unruly servant is cast into hell, that beat his fellow servant, that ate and drank with the drunken; but the idle servant that wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Meroz is cursed, not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping (Jud 5:23). Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him of his crumbs. Many will say, I set up no other gods; aye, but dost thou love, reverence, and obey the true God? For if not, thou dost fail in the first commandment. As to the second, thou sayest, I abhor idols; but dost thou delight in ordinances? I do not swear and rend the name of God by cursed oaths; aye, but dost thou glorify God, and honour him? I do not profane the Sabbath; but dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not plough and dance; but thou art idle, and toyest away the Sabbath. Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Thou art no adulterer; but dost thou study temperance and a holy sobriety in all things? Thou art no slanderer; but art thou tender of thy neighbour's honour and credit, as of thy own? Usually men cut off half their bill, as the unjust steward bade his lord's debtor set down fifty when he owed a hundred. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are not drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respect to God, and reverence for his holy Majesty. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 3. They walk in his ways.** Not in those of his enemies, nor even in their own. *Joseph Addison Alexander,* 1860.

**Ver. 3. They walk in *his* ways.** Habitually, constantly, characteristically. They are not *merely* honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men; but they walk in the ways of God; they are *religious.* *Albert Barnes,* 1798-1870.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 3. — They also do no iniquity.** They work no iniquity

1. Purpose of heart;

2. Delight;

3. Perseverance;

4. Nor at all when heart is fully sanctified unto God; Christ dwelling in it by faith casting out sin. — *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 3.** — The relation between negative and positive virtue. Or with God the best preventive of iniquity.

**Psalms 119:4\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.** So that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to have done, seeing we have our Lord's command for it. God's precepts require *careful* obedience: there is no keeping them by accident. Some give to God a careless service, a sort of hit or miss obedience, but the Lord has not commanded such service, nor will he accept it. His law demands the love of all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and a careless religion has none of these. We are also called to *zealous* obedience. We are to keep the precepts abundantly: the vessels of obedience should be filled to the brim, and the command carried out to the full of its meaning. As a man diligent in business arouses himself to do as much trade as he can, so must we be eager to serve the Lord as much as possible. Nor must we spare pains to do so, for a diligent obedience will also be *laborious and self denying*. Those who are diligent in business rise up early and sit up late, and deny themselves much of comfort and repose. They are not soon tired, or if they are they persevere even with aching brow and weary eye. So should we serve the Lord. Such a Master deserves diligent servants; such service he demands, and will be content with nothing less. How seldom do men render it, and hence many through their negligence miss the double blessing spoken of in this Psalm.

Some are diligent in superstition and will worship; be it ours to be diligent in keeping God's precepts. It is of no use travelling fast if we are not in the right road. Men have been diligent in a losing business, and the more they have traded the more they have lost: this is bad enough in commerce, we cannot afford to have it so in our religion.

God has not commanded us to be diligent in *making* precepts, but in *keeping* them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture, and to strive to keep them all, in all places, towards all men, and in all respects. If we do not this, we may become eminent in our own religion, but we shall not have kept the command of God; nor shall we be accepted of him.

The Psalmist began with the third person: he is now coming near home, and has already reached the first person plural, according to our version; we shall soon hear him crying out personally and for himself. As the heart glows with love to holiness, we long to have a personal interest in it. The word of God is a heart affecting book, and when we begin to sing its praises it soon comes home to us, and sets us praying to be ourselves conformed to its teachings.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.** It is not a matter adiaforov, and left to the discretion of men, either to hear, or to neglect sacred discourses, theological readings, and expositions of the Sacred Book; but God has commanded, and not commanded cursorily when speaking of another matter, but dam, earnestly and greatly he has commanded us to keep his precepts. There should be infixed in our mind the words found in De 6:6, *"My* *words shall be in thy heart:"* in Mt 17:5, *"Hear ye him."* in Joh 5:39, *"Search the Scriptures."* Above all things, students of theology should remember the Pauline rule in 1Ti 3:, *"Give attention to reading."* *Solomon Gesner.*

**Ver. 4. Thou hast commanded us,** etc. Hath God enjoined us to observe his precepts so exceedingly carefully and diligently? Then let nothing draw us therefrom, no, not in the least circumstance; let us esteem nothing needless, frivolous, or superfluous, that we have a warrant for out of his word; nor count those too wise or precise that will stand resolutely upon the same: if the Lord require anything, though the world should gainsay it, and we be derided and abused for the doing of it, yet let us proceed still in the course of our obedience. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 4. Diligently.** For three causes should we keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence: first, because our adversary that seeks to snare us by the transgression of them is diligent in tempting, for he goes about, night and day, seeking to devour us; next, because we ourselves are weak and infirm, by the greater diligence have we need to take heed to ourselves; thirdly, because of the great loss we sustain by every vantage Satan gets over us; for we find by experience, that as a wound is sooner made than it is healed, so guiltiness of conscience is easily contracted, but not so easily done away. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 4. Diligently.** In this verse he reminds the reader how well he knew that this study of the divine law must necessarily be severe, (earnest), since God has commanded that it should be observed diligently; that is, with the profoundest study; as that which alone is good, and as everything is good which it commands. *Antonio Brucioli,* 1534.

**Ver. 4.** The word translated "diligently, "doth signify in the original tongue *wonderful much*, so that the words go thus: *"Thou hast commanded to keep thy precepts wonderful much."* *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 4-5. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts** **diligently,** Ps 119:4; this is God's imperative. **O that my** **ways were directed to keep thy statutes!** Ps 119:5; this should be our optative. *Thomas Adams,* 1614.

**Ver. 4-5.** It is very observable concerning David, that when he prayeth so earnestly, **O that my ways were directed to keep thy** **statutes,** he premises this as the reason, **Thou hast commanded** **us to keep thy statutes diligently,** thereby intimating that the ground of his obedience to God's precepts was the stamp of divine authority enjoining him. To this purpose it is that he saith in Ps 119:94, **I have sought thy precepts,** thereby implying that what he sought in his obedience was the fulfilling of God's will. Indeed, that only and properly is obedience which is done *intuitu* *voluntatis divinae*, with a respect to and eye upon the divine will. As that is only a divine faith which believeth a truth, not because of human reason but divine revelation, so that only is a true obedience which conforms to the command, not because it may consist with any selfish ends, but because it carrieth in it an impression of Christ's authority. *Nathanael Hardy.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 4.** —

1. Take notice of the law giver: "Thou." :Not thy equal one that will be baffled, but the great God.

2. He hath interposed authority: "hast commanded."

3. The nature of this obedience, or thing commanded: "To keep thy precepts." — *T. Manton.*

**Ver. 4. — The supplementary commandment.** God having ordained moral law, supplements it with a commandment prescribing the manner keeping it. Hence:

1. God is not indifferent to men's treatment of his— whether they observe, neglect, or defy it.

2. When observed, discriminates the spirit of its observance, whether slavish, partial, or diligent.

3. There is but one spirit of obedience which satisfies requirement. "Diligently" implies an obedience which is, — careful ascertain the law— prompt to fulfil it (Ps 119:60) — unreserved— love inspired ("diligently, "old meaning, through the Latin, "lovingly, " Ps 119:47,113).

4. Does our obedience come up to this standard? — *C A.D.*

**Ver. 4. — Not only is service commanded, but the manner of it.** Heartiess, care, perseverance required, because without these it will not be uniform, or victorious over difficulty.

**Ver. 4. — How to obey**: "Diligently."

1. Not, partially, but fully.

2. Not doubtfully, but confidently.

3. Not reluctantly, but readily.

4. Slovenly, but carefully.

5. Not coldly, but earnestly.

6. Not fitfully, but regularly. — *W. J.*

**Ver. 4-6.** — A willing recognition (Ps 119:4). An ardent as (Ps 119:5). A happy consequence (Ps 119:6). — *W. D.*

**Psalms 119:5\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!** Divine commands should direct us in the subject of our prayers. We cannot of ourselves keep God's statutes as he would have them kept, and yet we long to do so: what resort have we but prayer? We must ask the Lord to work our works in us, or we shall never work out his commandments. This verse is a sigh of regret because the Psalmist feels that he has not kept the precepts diligently, it is a cry of weakness appealing for help to one who can aid, it is a request of bewilderment from one who has lost his way and would fain be directed in it, and it is a petition of faith from one who loves God and trusts in him for grace.

Our ways are by nature opposed to the way of God, and must be turned by the Lord's direction in another direction from that which they originally take or they will lead us down to destruction. God can direct the mind and will without violating our free agency, and he will do so in answer to prayer; in fact, he has begun the work already in those who are heartily praying after the fashion of this verse. It is for present holiness that the desire arises in the heart. O that it were so now with me: but future persevering holiness is also meant, for he longs for grace to keep henceforth and for ever the statutes of the Lord.

The sigh of the text is really a prayer, though it does not exactly take that form. Desires and longings are of the essence of supplication, and it little matters what shape they take. "O that" is as acceptable a prayer as "Our Father."

One would hardly have expected a prayer for direction; rather should we have looked for a petition for enabling. Can we not direct ourselves? What if we cannot row, we can steer. The Psalmist herein confesses that even for the smallest part of his duty he felt unable without grace. He longed for the Lord to influence his will, as well as to strengthen his hands. We want a rod to point out the way as much as a staff to support us in it.

The longing of the text is prompted by admiration of the blessedness of holiness, by a contemplation of the righteous man's beauty of character, and by a reverent awe of the command of God. It is a personal application to the writer's own case of the truths which he had been considering. "O that *my* ways, "etc. It were well if all who hear and read the word would copy this example and turn all that they hear into prayer. We should have more keepers of the statutes if we had more who sighed and cried after the grace to do so.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 5.** In tracing the connection of this verse with the preceding, we cannot forbear to remark how accurately the middle path is preserved, as keeping us at an equal: distance from the idea of self sufficiency to **keep the Lord's statutes,** and self justification in neglecting them. The first attempt to render spiritual obedience will quickly convince us of our utter helplessness. We might as soon create a world as create m our hearts one pulse of spiritual life. And yet our inability does not cancel our obligation. It is the weakness of a heart that "cannot be subject to the law of God, "for no other reason than because it is "carnal, "and therefore "enmity against God." Our inability is our sin, our guilt, our condemnation, and instead of excusing our condition, stops our mouth, and leaves us destitute of any plea of defence before God. Thus our obligation remains in full force. We are bound to obey the commands of God, whether we can or not. What, then, remains for us, but to return the mandate to heaven, accompanied with an earnest prayer, that the Lord would write upon our hearts those statutes to which he requires obedience in his word? **Thou hast commanded us to** **keep thy statutes diligently.** We acknowledge, Lord, our obligation, but we feel our impotency. Lord, help us; we look unto thee. **O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.** *Charles Bridges, 1849.*

**Ver. 5. O that,** etc. In the former verse the prophet David observes the charge which God gives, and that is, that his commandments be diligently kept: here, then, he observes his own weakness and insufficiency to discharge that great duty, and therefore, as one by the spirit desirous to discharge it, and yet by the flesh not able to discharge it, he breaketh out into these words, **O that my ways were directed,** etc. Much like unto a child that being commanded to take up some great weight from the ground, is willing to do it, though not able to do it: or a sick patient advised to walk many turns in his chamber, finds a desire in his heart, though inability in his body to do that which he is directed unto. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 5. O that my ways,** etc. It is the use and duty of the people of God to turn precepts into prayers. That this is the practice of God's children appeareth: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God" (Jer 31:18). God had said, "Turn you, and you shall live, "and they ask it of God, "Turn us, "as he required it of them. It was Austin's prayer, *Da quod jubes, et jube quod* *vis,* "Give what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt." It is the duty of the saints; for, 1st, *It suits with the* *Gospel covenant*, where precepts and promises go hand in hand; where God giveth what he commandeth, and worketh all our works in us and for us. They are not conditions of the covenant only, but a part of it. What God hath required at our hands, that we may desire at his hands. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he giveth no straw. *Lex jubet, gracia juvat*. The articles of the new covenant are not only put into the form of precepts, but promises. The law giveth no strength to perform anything, but the Gospel offereth grace. Secondly, Because, *by this means, the ends of God are fulfilled*. Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it, (1.) To keep up his right. (2.) To convince us of our impotency, and that, upon a trial, without his grace we cannot do his work. (3.) That the creature may express his readiness to obey. (4.) To bring us to lie at his feet for grace. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 5. O that,** etc. The whole life of a good Christian is an *holy desire*, saith Augustine; and this is always seconded with endeavour, without the which, affection is like Rachel, beautiful, but barren. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 5. O that my ways were directed,** etc. The original word Nwk, *kun*, is sometimes rendered to *establish*, and, accordingly, it may seem as if the prophet were soliciting for himself the virtue of perseverance. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying *to direct* for, although God is plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding and the perversity of our hearts constantly need the direction of his Spirit. *John Calvin.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 5. — The prayer of the gracious.**

1. Suggested by each preceding clause of blessing.

2. By a consciousness of failure.

3. By a loving clinging to the Lord.

**Ver. 5.** —

1. The end desired: "To keep thy statutes." Not to be safe merely, or happy, but holy.

2. The help implored.

(a) To understand the divine precepts.

(b) To keep them. — *G. R.*

**Ver. 5. — Longing to obey.**

1. *It is a noble aspiration.* There is nothing grander than the desire to do this except the doing of it.

2. *It is a spiritual aspiration.* Not the offspring of our carnal nature. It is the heart of God in the new creature.

3. *It is a practicable aspiration.* We sometimes sigh for the impossible. But this may be attained by divine grace.

4. *It is an intense aspiration.* It is the "Oh!" of a burning wish.

5. *It is an influential aspiration.* It does not evaporate in sighs. It is a mighty incentive implanted by grace which will not let us rest without holiness. — *W. J.*

**Psalms 119:6\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed.** He had known shame, and here he rejoices in the prospect of being freed from it. Sin brings shame, and when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished. What a deliverance this is, for to some men death is preferable to shame!

**When I have respect unto all thy commandments.** When he respects God he shall respect himself and be respected. Whenever we err we prepare ourselves for confusion of face and sinking of heart: if no one else is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of myself if I do iniquity. Our first parents never knew shame till they made the acquaintance of the old serpent, and it never left them till their gracious God had covered them with sacrificial skins. Disobedience made them naked and ashamed. We, ourselves, will always have cause for shame till every sin is vanquished, and every duty is observed. When we pay a continual and universal respect to the will of the Lord, then we shall be able to look ourselves in the face in the looking glass of the law, and we shall not blush at the sight of men or devils, however eager their malice may be to lay somewhat to our charge.

Many suffer from excessive diffidence, and this verse suggests a cure. An abiding sense of duty will make us bold, we shall be afraid to be afraid. No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds. When we are on the king's highway by daylight, and are engaged upon royal business, we need ask no man's leave. It would be a dishonour to a king to be ashamed of his livery and his service; no such shame should ever crimson the cheek of a Christian, nor will it if he has due reverence for the Lord his God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life; a man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, ashamed of his own children, but he will never be ashamed of having in all things regarded the will of the Lord his God.

It is worthy of remark that David promises himself no immunity from shame till he has carefully paid homage to all the precepts. Mind that word *"all, "*and leave not one command out of your respect. Partial obedience still leaves us liable to be called to account for those commands which we have neglected. A man may have a thousand virtues, and yet a single failing may cover him with shame.

To a poor sinner who is buried in despair, it may seem a very unlikely thing that he should ever be delivered from shame. He blushes, and is confounded, and feels that he can never lift up his face again. Let him read these words: "Then shall I not be ashamed." David is not dreaming, nor picturing an impossible case. Be assured, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit can renew in you the image of God, so that you shall yet look up without fear. O for sanctification to direct us in God's way, for then shall we have boldness both towards God and his people, and shall no more crimson with confusion.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed.** No one likes *to be* *ashamed* or *to blush*:therefore all things which bring shame after them must be avoided: Ezr 9:6 Jer 3:25 Da 9:7,9. As the workman keeps his eye fixed on his pattern, and the scholar on the copy of his writing master; so the godly man ever and anon turns his eyes to the word of his God. *Martin Geier.*

**Ver. 6.** There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace. This which is here spoken of is to be understood not of a holy self loathing, but a confounding shame. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed,** etc. Then shall I have confidence both towards God and man, and mine own soul, when I can pronounce of myself that my obedience is impartial, and uniform, and universal, no secret sin reserved for my favour, no least commandment knowingly or willingly neglected by me. *Henry Hammond.*

**Ver. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed,** etc. You ask, Why is he not ashamed who has **respect unto all the commandments of God**? I answer, the sense is, as if he had said, The commandments of God are so pure and excellent, that though thou shouldest regard the whole and each one of them most attentively, thou wouldest not find anything that would cause thee to blush. The laws of Lycurgus are praised; but they permitted theft. The statutes of Plato are praised; but they commended the community of wives. *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:"* Ps 19:7. It is a mirror, reflecting the beautiful light of the stars on him who looks into it. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

**Ver. 6.** The blessing here spoken of is freedom from shame in looking unto *all* the commandments. If God hear prayer, and establish the soul in this habit of keeping the commandments, there will be yet this further blessing of being able to look unto every precept without shame. Many men can look at *some* commandments without shame. Turning to the ten commandments, the honest man feels no shame as he gazes on the eighth, the pure man is free from reproach as he reads the seventh, he who is reverent and hates blasphemy is not rebuked by the thought that he has violated the third, while the filial spirit rather delights in than shuns the fifth. So on with the remainder. Most men perhaps can look at some of the precepts with comparative freedom from reproof. But who can so look unto them all? Yet this, also, the godly heart aspires to. In this verse we find the Psalmist consciously anticipating the truth of a word in the New Testament: "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." *Frederick G. Marchant.*

**Ver. 6. Ashamed.**

I can bear scorpion's stings, tread fields of fire,

In frozen gulfs of cold eternal lie;

Be tossed aloft through tracts of endless void,

But cannot live in shame. *Joanna Baillie,* 1762-1851.

**Ver. 6. When I have respect unto all thy commandments.** Literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man *intends* to keep ALL the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man *can* be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep ALL, the commandments of God; to submit to his will *in everything*. *Albert Barnes.*

**Ver. 6. All thy commandments.** There is the same reason for obedience to one command as another, — God's authority, who is the Lawgiver (Jas 2:11); and therefore when men choose one duty and overlook others, they do not so much obey the will of God, as gratify their own humours and fancies, pleasing Him only so far as they can please themselves too; and this is not reasonable; we never yield him a "reasonable service, "but when it is universal. *Edward Veal* (1632-1708), *in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Ver. 6. All thy commandments.** A partial obedience will never satisfy a child of God. The exclusion of any commandment from its supreme regard in the heart is the brand of hypocrisy. Even Herod could "do many things, "and yet one evil way cherished, and therefore unforsaken, was sufficient to show the sovereign power of sin undisturbed within. Saul slew all the Amalekites but one; and that single exception in the path of universal obedience marked the unsoundness of his profession, cost him the loss of his throne, and brought him under the awful displeasure of his God. And thus the foot, or the hand, or the right eye, the corrupt unmortified members, bring the whole body to hell. Reserves are the canker of Christian sincerity. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 6. Unto all thy commandments.** *Allow* that *any* of God's commandments may be transgressed, and we shall soon have the whole decalogue set aside. *Adam Clarke,* 1760-1832.

**Ver. 6.** Many will do some good, but are defective in other things, and usually in those which are most necessary. They cull out the easiest and cheapest parts of religion, such as do not contradict their lusts and interests. We can never have sound peace till we regard all. **Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto** **all thy commandments.** Shame is fear of a just reproof. This reproof is either from the supreme or the deputy judge. The supreme judge of all our actions is God. This should be our principal care, that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming, nor disapproved in the judgment. But there is a deputy judge which every man has in his own bosom. Our consciences do acquit or condemn us as we are partial or sincere in our duty to God, and much depends on that. 1Jo 3:20-21, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Well, then, that our hearts may not reprove or reproach us, we should be complete in all the will of God. Alas, otherwise you will never have evidence of your sincerity. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 6.** Such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that lie accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were a full obedience... O, who would not serve such a Lord? You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as so rigid and strict, that they can never please them; no, not when they do their utmost: but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel indulgence when he said, **Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all** **thy commandments,** when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going to, though he be as yet short of it; there he would be, and he is putting on all he can to reach it: so stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame. *William Gurnall,* 1617-1679.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 6.** — See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 1443: "A Clear Conscience."

**Ver. 6.** — Holy confidence the offspring of universal obedience.

**Ver. 6.** — The armour of proof.

1. Universal obedience will give unabashed confidence—

(a) Before the criticising world.

(b) In the court of conscience.

(c) At the throne of grace.

(d) In the day of judgment.

2. But our obedience is far from universal, and leaves us open to

(a) The world's shafts.

(b) The rebukes of conscience.

(c) It paralyses our prayers

(d) It dares not appear for us at the bar of God.

3. Then let us by faith wrap ourselves in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Our answer to the world's cavil. We are not faultless, and for salvation we rest wholly on another. This righteousness is—

(a) The salve of our wounded conscience.

(b) Our mighty plea in prayer.

(c) Our triumphant vindication in the judgment day. — *C. A.D.*

**Ver. 6.** — Topic: — Self respect depends on respect for one greater than self. — *W. D.*

**Psalms 119:7\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 7. I will praise thee.** From prayer to praise is here, a long or a difficult journey. Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, "I will praise thee." He cannot but promise praise while he seeks sanctification. Mark how well he knows upon what head to set the crown. "I will praise *thee.*" He would himself be praiseworthy, but he counts God alone worthy of praise. By the sorrow and shame of sin he measures his obligations to the Lord who would teach him the art of living so that he should clean escape from his former misery.

**With up righteous of heart.** His heart would be upright if the Lord would teach him, and then it should praise its teacher. There is such a thing as false and feigned praise, and this the Lord abhors; but there is no music like that which comes from a pure soul which standeth in its integrity. Heart praise is required, uprightness in that heart, and teaching to make the heart upright. An upright heart is sure to bless the Lord, for grateful adoration is a part of its uprightness; no man can be right unless he is upright towards God, and this involves the rendering to him the praise which is his due.

**When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.** We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned. If we are ever to learn, the Lord must teach us, and especially upon such a subject as his judgments, for they are a great deep. While these are passing before our eyes, and we are learning from them, we ought to praise God, for the original is not, "when I have learned, "but, "in my learning." While yet I am a scholar I will be a chorister: my upright heart shall praise thine uprightness, my purified judgment shall admire thy judgments. God's providence is a book full of teaching, and to those whose hearts are right it is a music book, out of which they chant to Jehovah's praise. God's word is full of the record of his righteous providence, and as we read it we feel compelled to burst forth into expressions of holy delight and ardent praise. When we both read of God's judgments and become joyful partakers in them, we are doubly moved to song— song in which there is neither formality, nor hypocrisy, nor lukewarmness, for the heart is upright in the presentation of its praise.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 7. I will praise thee... when I shall have learned,** etc. There is no way to please God entirely and sincerely until we have learned both to know and do his will. Practical praise is the praise God looks after. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 7. I will praise thee.** What is the matter for which he praises God? It is that he has been taught something of him and by him amongst men. To have learned any tongue, or science, from some school of philosophy, bindeth us to our alma mater. We praise those who can teach a dog, a horse, this or that; but for us ass colts to learn the will of God, how to walk pleasing before him, this should be acknowledged of us as a great mercy from God. *Paul Bayne.*

**Ver. 7. Praise thee...when I shall have learned,** etc. But when doth David say that he will be thankful? Even when God shall teach him. Both the matter and the grace of thankfulness are from God. As he did with Abraham, he commanded him to worship by sacrifice, and at the same time gave him the sacrifice: so doth he with all his children; for he gives not only good things, for which they should thank him, but in like manner grace by which they are able to thank him. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 7. When, I shall have learned.** By learning he means his attaining not only to the knowledge of the word, but the practice of it. It is not a speculative light, or a bare notion of things: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (Joh 6:45). It is such a learning as the effect will necessarily follow, such a light and illumination as doth convert the soul, and frame our hearts and ways according to the will of God. For otherwise, if we get understanding of the word, nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good without practice. The best of God's servants are but scholars and students in the knowledge and obedience of his word. For saith David, *"When I shall have* *learned."* The professors of the Christian religion were primitively called disciples or learners: to plhyov twn mayhtwn; "the multitude of the disciples" (Ac 6:2.) *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 7. Learned thy righteous judgments.** We see here what David especially desired to learn, namely, the word and will of God: he would ever be a scholar in this school, and sought daily to ascend to the highest form; that learning to know, he might remember; remembering, might believe; believing, might delight; delighting might admire; admiring, might adore; adoring, might practise; and practising, might continue in the way of God's statutes. This learning is the old and true learning indeed, and he is best learned in this art, who turneth God's word into good works. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 7. Judgments of thy righteousness** are the decisions concerning right and wrong which give expression to and put in execution the righteousness of God. *Franz Delitzsch.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 7.** — The best of praise, the best of learning, the best of blendings, viz., praise and holiness.

**Ver. 7.** —

1. The professor of sacred music: "I will praise."

2. The subject of his song: "Thee."

3. The instrument: "Heart."

4. The instrument tuned: "Uprightness of heart."

5. The musician's training academy: "Judgments." — *W.D.*

**Ver. 7. — Learning and praising.**

1. They are two spiritual exercises. It is possible for learners and singers to be carnal and sensual; but in this case they are employed about the righteous ends, works, and ways of the Lord.

2. They are two appropriate exercises. What can be more seemly than to learn of God and to praise him?

3. They are two profitable exercises. The expectations of the most utilitarian are surpassed. The pleasure and the profit yield abundant reward. Heart, head, life are all benefited.

4. They are two mutually assisting exercises. In the one we are receptive, and in the other communicative. By the one we are fitted to do the other. By the former we are stimulated to do the latter. How wonderfully the lesson is turned into a song, and the learner into a singer. — *W.J.*

**Ver. 7.** —

1. Deficiency confessed: "When I shall have learned." This is essential to growth. It is an admission all can truly make.

2. Progress anticipated. He gave his heart to the work of learning. He sought divine help.

3. Praise promised. He promised it to God alone. He vowed it should be sincere: "with upright heart." — *W. Williams, of Lambeth,* 1882.

**Psalms 119:8\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 8. I will keep thy statutes.** A calm resolve. When praise calms down into solid resolution it is well with the soul. Zeal which spends itself in singing, and leaves no practical residuum of holy living, is little worth: "I will praise" should be coupled with "I will keep." This firm resolve is by no means boastful, like Peter's "though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee, "for it is followed by a humble prayer for divine help,

**O forsake me not utterly.** Feeling his own incapacity, he trembles lest he should be left to himself, and this fear is increased by the horror which he has of falling into sin. The "I will keep" sounds lightly enough now that the humble cry is heard with it. This is a happy amalgam: resolution and dependence. We meet with those who to all appearance humbly pray, but there is no force of character, no decision in them, and consequently the pleading of the closet is not embodied in the life: on the other band, we meet with abundance of resolve attended with an entire absence of dependence upon God, and this makes as poor a character as the former. The Lord grant us to have such a blending of excellences that we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

This prayer is one which is certain to be heard, for assuredly it must be highly pleasing to God to see a man set upon obeying his will, and therefore it must be most agreeable to him to be present with such a person, and to help him in his endeavours. How can he forsake one who does not forsake his law?

The peculiar dread which tinges this prayer with a sombre hue is the fear of utter forsaking. Well may the soul cry out against such a calamity. To be left, that we may discover our weakness, is a sufficient trial: To be altogether forsaken would be ruin and death. Hiding the face in a little wrath for a moment brings us very low: an absolute desertion would land us ultimately in the lowest hell. But the Lord never has utterly forsaken his servants, and he never will, blessed be his name. If we long to keep his statutes he will keep us; yea, his grace will keep us keeping his law.

There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of Ps 119:5 is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two, "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 8.** This verse, being the last of this portion, is the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of the keeping the law of God there take notice:

1. Of his resolution, **I will keep thy statutes.**

2. Of his prayer, **O forsake me not utterly.** It is his purpose to keep the law; yet because he is conscious to himself of many infirmities, he prays against desertion.

In the prayer more is intended than is expressed. *"O forsake me* *not"*, he means, strengthen me in this work; and if thou shouldest desert me, yet but for a while, Lord, not for ever; if in part, not in whole. Four points we may observe hence:

1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution as to a course of godliness.

2. Those that resolve upon a course of obedience have need to fly to God's help.

3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw, and seem to forsake us.

4. Though God seem to forsake us, and really doth so in part; yet we should pray that it may not be a total and utter desertion. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 8 (with 7). I will keep thy statutes,** etc. The resolution to *"keep the Lord's statutes"* is the natural result of having *"learned his righteous judgments."* And on this point David illustrates the inseparable and happy union of "simplicity" of dependence, and "godly sincerity" of obedience. Instantly upon forming his resolution, he recollects that the performance of it is beyond the power of human strength, and therefore the next moment he follows it with prayer: **I will keep thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly.** *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 8. I will.** David setteth a personal example of holiness. If the king of Israel keep God's statutes, the people of Israel wilt be ashamed to neglect them. Caesar was wont to say, Princes must not say, *Ite*, go ye, without me; but, *Venite,* come ye, along with me. So said Gideon (Jud 5:17): "As ye see me do, so do ye." *R. Greenham.*

**Ver. 8. Forsake me not utterly.** There is a total and a partial desertion. Those who are bent to obey God may for a while, and in some degree, be left to themselves. We cannot promise ourselves an utter immunity from desertion; but it is not total. We shall find for his great name's sake, "The Lord will not forsake his people" (1Sa 12:22), and, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Not utterly, yet in part they may be forsaken. Elijah was forsaken, but not as Ahab: Peter was forsaken in part, but not as Judas, who was utterly forsaken, and made a prey to the Devil. David was forsaken to be humbled and bettered; but Saul was forsaken utterly to be destroyed. Saith Theophylact, God may forsake his people so as to shut out their prayers, (Ps 80:4), so as to interrupt the peace and joy of their heart, and abate their strength, so that their spiritual life may be much at a stand, and sin may break out, and they may fall foully; but they are not utterly forsaken. One way or other, God is still present; present in light sometimes when he is not present in strength, when he manifests the evil of their present condition, so as to make them mourn under it; and present in awakening their desires, though not in giving them enjoyment. As long as there is any esteem of God, he is not yet gone; there is some light and love yet left, manifested by our desires of communion with him. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 8. Forsake me not utterly.** The desertions of God's elect are first of all *partial*, that is, such as wherein God doth not wholly forsake them, but in some part. Secondly, *temporary*, that is, for some space of time, and never beyond the compass of this present life. "For a moment (saith the Lord in Esay) in mine anger I hid my face from thee for a little season, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." And to this purpose David, well acquainted with this matter, prayeth, *"Forsake me not* *overlong."* This sort of desertions, though it be but for a time, yet no part of a Christian man's life is free from them; and very often taking deep place in the heart of man, they are of long continuance. David continued in his dangerous fall about the space of a whole year before he was recovered. Luther confesseth of himself, that, after his conversion, he lay three years in desperation. Common observation in such like cases hath made record of even longer times of spiritual forsaking. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 8. O forsake me not utterly.** This prayer reads like the startled cry of one who was half afraid that he had been presumptuous in expressing the foregoing resolve. He desired to keep the divine statutes, and like Peter he vowed that he would do so; but remembering his own weakness, he recoils from his own venturesomeness, and feels that he must pray. I have made a solemn vow, but what if I have uttered it in my own strength? What if God should leave me to myself? He is filled with terror at the thought. He breaks out with an "O." He implores and beseeches the Lord not to test him by leaving him even for an instant entirely to himself. To be forsaken of God is the worst ill that the most melancholy saint ever dreams of. Thank God, it will never fall to our lot; for no promise can be more express than that which saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This promise does not prevent our praying, but excites us to it. Because God will not forsake his own, therefore do we cry to him in the agony of our feebleness, "O forsake me not utterly." *C. H. S.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 8.** —

1. A hopeful resolve for life.

2. A dreadful fear.

3. A series of considerations removing the fear.

**Ver. 8.** —

1. The resolution: "I will keep, "etc.

2. The position: "O forsake me not utterly."

(a) Filial submission. I deserve it occasionally.

(b) Filial confidence. "Not utterly."

3. The connection between the two. Obedience without prayer and prayer without obedience are equally in vain. To make headway both oars must be applied. God cannot abide lazy beggars, who while they can get anything by asking will not work. — *G.R.*

**Ver. 8. — O forsake me not utterly.** Divine desertion deprecated.

1. **The anguished prayer.**

(a) Sovereign forsaking. Sovereignty is not arbitrariness

or capriciousness: perhaps its right definition is

mysterious kingly love; unknown now, but justified when

revealed.

(b) Vicarious forsaking.

(c) Forsaking on account of sin. David, Jonah, and Peter.

The seven churches of Asia; the Jews. But to know what

"utter" both in regard to degree and time means, we must go

to hell. Like one trembling on the very verge of hell, he

prays. Like belated traveller, in vast wood and surrounded

by beasts of prey, sighs at day's departure. Like the watch

on the raft seeing the sail that he has shouted himself

hoarse to stop fading away in the sky line.

2. **Its doctrinal foundation.** Where he condescends to dwell, his abode is perpetual. He can only utterly forsake us because he was deceived in us. He can only utterly forsake because baffled. Both imply blasphemy. Thou who hatest putting away thou who hast never yet utterly forsaken any saint, make not me the solitary exception.

3. **Historical certainty of answer.** The saint and the church in all time delivered. It may tarry till "eventide, "as in Cowper's case. His face bore after death an expression of delighted surprise. — *W.A.*

**Psalms 119:9\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?** How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is but a young man, full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience; how shall he get right, and keep right? Never was there a more important question for any man; never was there a fitter time for asking it than at the commencement of life. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent young man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be himself clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last; but, alas, his way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed, and he himself has within his nature a tendency towards that which defileth. Here, then, is the difficulty, first of beginning aright, next of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right till perfection is ultimately reached: this is hard for any man, how shall a youth accomplish it? The way, or life, of the man has to be cleansed from the sins of his youth behind him, and kept clear of the sins which temptation will place before him: this is the work, this is the difficulty.

No nobler ambition can lie before a youth, none to which he is called by so sure a calling; but none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious enterprise of living a pure and gracious life; rather let him enquire the way by which all obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the Psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of defilers by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled. He is young and unaccustomed to the road, let him not be ashamed often to enquire his way of him who is so ready and so able to instruct him in it.

Our *"way"* is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which rather puzzle than enlighten the mind. Among all the questions which a young man asks, and they are many, let this be the first and chief: "Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?" This is a question suggested by common sense, and pressed home by daily occurrences; but it is not to be answered by unaided reason, nor, when answered, can the directions be carried out by unsupported human power. It is ours to ask the question, it is God's to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

**By taking heed thereto according to thy word.** Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless man ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought, we have only to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls; but to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind. Let the careless remember this.

Yet the *"word"* is absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, care will darken into morbid anxiety, and conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to he right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. Should a man carefully measure out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial, and has poured out a deadly poison: the fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young man may surround himself with ten thousand ills, by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the word of God. Wilful ignorance is in itself wilful sin, and the evil which comes of it is without excuse. Let each man, whether young or old, who desires to be holy have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness, so that by its help he shall reach the benediction of the first verse of the Psalm, which suggested the Psalmist's enquiry, and awakened his desires.

Note how the first section of eight verses has for its first verse, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically sought for in the way appointed. The Lord saith, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

The eight verses alphabetically arranged:

9. **B**y what means shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.

10. **B**y day and by night have I sought thee with my whole heart: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11. **B**y thy grace I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

12. **B**lessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.

13. **B**y the words of my lips will I declare all the judgments of thy mouth.

14. **B**y far more than in all riches I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.

15. **B**y thy help I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16. **B**y thy grace I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. *Theodore Kuebler.*

*Whole eight verses*, 9-16. Every verse in the section begins with b, *a house*. The subject of the section is, The Law of Jehovah purifying the Life. Key word, xkz (*zacah*), *to be pure*, to make pure, to cleanse. *F. G. Marchant.*

**Ver. 9.** *Whole verse.* In this passage there is,

1. A question.

2. An answer given.

In the question, there is the person spoken of, *"a young man, "*and his work, *"Wherewithal shall he cleanse his way?"* In this question there are several things supposed.

1. That we are from the birth polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not *direct* "his way, "but "cleanse his way."

2. That we should be very early and betimes sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man.

3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy, how to dry up the issue of sin that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is enquired after is, What remedy there is against it? What course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer is given: *"By taking heed thereto according to thy word."* Where two things are to be observed.

1. The remedy.

2. The manner how it is applied and made use of.

1. The remedy is the word; by way of address to God, called *"Thy word"*; because, if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss.

2. The manner how it is applied and made use of, *"by taking* *heed thereto, "*etc.; by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?** etc. Aristotle, that great dictator in philosophy, despaired of achieving so great an enterprise as the rendering a young man capable of his hyika akroamata, "his grave and severe lectures of morality"; for that age is light and foolish, yet headstrong and untractable. Now, take a young man all in the heat and boiling of his blood, in the highest fermentation of his youthful lusts; and, at all these disadvantages, let him enter that great school of the Holy Spirit, the divine Scripture, and commit himself to the conduct of those blessed oracles; and he shall effectually be convinced, by his own experience, of the incredible virtue, the vast and mighty power, of God's word, in the success it hath upon him, and in his daily progression and advances in heavenly wisdom. *John Gibbon (about* 1660) *in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Ver. 9. A young man.** A prominent place— one of the twenty-two parts— is assigned to young men in the 119th Psalm. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement, young men are the future props of society, and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth. The strength, the aspirations, the unmarred expectations of youth, are in requisition for the world; O that they may be consecrated to God. *John Stephen, in "The Utterances of the 119 Psalm, "*1861.

**Ver. 9.** For **young man,** in the Hebrew the word is reg *naar, i.e., "shaken off"*; that is to say, from the milder and more tender care of his parents. Thus Mercerus and Savailerius. Secondly, *naar* may be rendered *"shaking off"*; that is to say, the yoke, for a young man begins to cast off the maternal, and frequently the paternal, yoke. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

**Ver. 9. Cleanse his way.** The expression does not absolutely convey the impression that the given young man is in a corrupt and discreditable way which requires cleansing, though this be true of all men originally: Isa 53:6. That which follows makes known that such could not be the case with this young man. The very inquiry shows that his heart is not in a corrupt state. Desire is present, direction is required. The inquiry is— How shall a young man make a clean way — a pure line of conduct— through this defiling world? It is a question, I doubt not, of great anxiety to every convert whose mind is awakened to a sense of sin— how he shall keep clear of the sin, avoid the loose company, and rid himself of the wicked pleasures and practices of this enslaving world. And as he moves on in the line of integrity— many temptations coming in his way, and much inward corruption rising up to control him— how often will the same anxious inquiry arise: Ro 7:24. It is only in a false estimate of one's own strength that any can think otherwise, and the spirit of such false estimate will be brought low. How felt you, my young friends, who have been brought to Christ, in the day of your resolving to be his? But for all such anxiety there seems to be an answer in the text.

**By taking heed thereto according to thy word.** It is not that young men in our day require information: they require the inclination. In the gracious young man there are both, and the word that began feeds the proper motives. The awful threatenings and the sweet encouragements both more him in the right direction. The answer furnished to this anxious inquiry is sufficiently plain and practical. He is directed to the word of God for all direction, and we might say, for all promised assistance. Still the matter presented in this light does not appear to me to bring out the full import of the passage. The inquiry to me would seem to extend over the whole verse. (This opinion is confirmed by the quotation which follows from Cowles.) There is required the cleansing that his way be according to the Divine Word. The enquiry is of the most enlarged comprehension, and will be made only by one who can say that he has been honestly putting himself in the way, as the young man in Ps 119:10-11; and it can be answered only by the heart that takes in all the strength provided by the blessed God, as is expressed here in Ps 119:12. The Psalmist makes the inquiry, he shows how earnestly he had sought to be in the right way, and immediately he finds all his strength in God. Thus he declares how he has been enabled to do rightly, and how he will do rightly in the future. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 9.** Instead of question and answer both in this one verse, the Hebrew demands the construction with question only, leaving the answer to be inferred from the drift of the entire Psalm— thus: *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way to keep it according* *to thy word?* This translation gives precisely the force of the last clause. Hebrew punctuation lacks the interrogation point, so that we have no other clue but the form of the sentence and the sense by which to decide where the question ends. *Henry Cowles, 1872.*

**Ver. 9. His way.** xra, *orach*, which we translate *way* here, signifies a *track*, a *rut*, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot. A *young sinner* has no *broad beaten* path; he has his *private ways* of offence, his *secret pollutions*;and how shall he be cleansed from these? how can he be saved from what will destroy mind, body, and soul? Let him hear what follows; the description is from God.

1. He is to *consider* that his way is *impure*;and how abominable this must make him appear in the sight of God.

2. He must examine it *according to God's word*, and carefully hear what God has said concerning *him* and *it*.

3. He must *take heed* to it, rmvl, *lishmor*, to *keep, guard,* and *preserve his way* — his general course of life, from all defilement. *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 9. By taking heed,** etc. I think the words may be better rendered and supplied thus, *by observing* what is *according to* *thy word*;which shows how a sinner is to be cleansed from his sins by the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness, and be clean through his word; and also how and by whom the work of sanctification is wrought in the heart, even by the Spirit of God, by means of the word, and what is the rule of a man's walk and conversation: he will find the word of God to be profitable, to inform in the doctrines of justification and pardon, to acquaint him with the nature of regeneration and sanctification; and for the correction and amendment of his life and manners, and for his instruction in every branch of manners: 2Ti 3:16. *John Gill,* 1697-1771.

**Ver. 9. By taking heed.** There is an especial necessity for this *"Take heed, "*because of the proneness of a young man to thoughtlessness, carelessness, presumption, self confidence. There is an especial necessity for *"taking heed, "*because of the difficulty of the way. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a narrow path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a new path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a slippery path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is an eventful path. *James Harrington Evans,* 1785-1849.

**Ver. 9. According to thy word.** God's word is the glass which discovereth all spiritual deformity, and also the water and soap which washes and scours it away. *Paul Bayne.*

**Ver. 9. According to thy word.** I do not say that there are no other guides, no other fences. I do not say that conscience is worth nothing, and conscience in youth is especially sensitive and tender; I do not say that prayer is not a most valuable fence, but prayer without taking heed is only another name for presumption: prayer and carelessness can never walk hand in hand together; and I therefore say that there is no fence nor guard that can so effectually keep out every enemy as prayerful reading of the word of God, bringing every solicitation from the world or from companions, every suggestion from our own hearts and passions, to the test of God's word: — What says the Bible? The answer of the Bible, with the teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will in all the intricacies of our road be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. *Barton Bouchier.*

**Ver. 9. Thy word.** The word is the only weapon (like Goliath's sword, none to equal this), for the hewing down and cutting off of this stubborn enemy, our lusts. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their greatest pride: if ever lust rageth at one time more than another, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is giddy, and his lust is hot and impetuous: his sun is climbing higher still, and he thinks it is a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasure. The rigour of his strength affords him more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can expect, and he is farther from the fear of death's gunshot, as he thinks, than old men who are upon the very brink of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them, into which they are suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his car, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him fly in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from the feast when they saw Amnon their brother murdered at the table. When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts, how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in the waters of the word of God. *William Gumall.*

**Ver. 9.** The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying. *John Flavel,* 1627-1691.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

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

**Ver. 9-16. — Sanctification by the word**, declared generally (Ps 119:9); sought personally (Ps 119:10-12); published to others (Ps 119:13); personally rejoiced in (Ps 119:14-16).

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 9.** —

1. The young man's question.

2. The wise man's reply.

**Ver. 9.** — In the word of God, when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, there is,

1. A sufficiency of light to discover to men the need of cleansing their way.

2. Sufficiency of energy for the cleansing their way.

3. A sufficiency of pleasure to encourage them to choose to cleanse their way.

4. A sufficiency of support to sustain them in their cleansed way. — *Theophilus Jones, in a* "Sermon to the Young, "1829.

**Ver. 9. The word of God provides for the cleansing of the way.**

1. By pointing out to the young man the evil of the way.

2. By discovering an infallible remedy for the disorders of his nature— the salvation that is by Jesus Christ.

3. By becoming a directory in all the paths of duty to which he may be called. — *Daniel Wilson,* 1828.

**Ver. 9. — The Psalmist's rules for the attainment of holiness** **deduced from his own experience.**

1. Seek God with thy "whole heart" (Ps 119:2). Be truly sensible of your wants.

2. Keep and remember what God says (Ps 119:11): "Thy word have I hidden, "etc.

3. Reduce all this to practice (Ps 119:11): "That I might not sin against thee."

4. Bless God for what he has given (vet. 12): "Blessed art thou, "etc.

5. Ask more (Ps 119:12): Teach me thy statute, .

6. Be ready to communicate his knowledge to others (Ps 119:13): "With my lips have I declared."

7. Let it have a due effect on thy own heart (Ps 119:14): "I have rejoiced, "etc.

8. Meditate frequently upon them (Ps 119:15): "I will meditate, "etc.

9. Deeply reflect on them (Ps 119:16): "I will have respect, "etc. As food undigested will not nourish the body, so the word of God not considered with deep meditation and reflection will not feed the soul.

10. Having pursued the above course he should continue in it, and then his happiness would be secured (Ps 119:16): "I will not forget thy word: I will (in consequence) delight myself in thy statutes." — *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 9. — A question and answer for the young.** The Bible is a book for young people. Here it intimates,

1. That the young man's way needs to be cleansed. His way of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting.

2. That he must take an active part in the work. The efficient cause in the operation is God. Other good influences are also at work. But the young man must be in hearty and practical sympathy with the work.

3. That he must use the Bible for the purpose. This records facts, presents incitations, enjoins precepts, utters promises, and sets up examples, all which are adapted to make a young man holy. By reading, studying, and imitating the Scriptures in a lowly and prayerful spirit the young shall escape pollution and ornament society. — *W.J.*

**Ver. 9. — A word to the young.**

1. Show how the young man is in special danger of defiling his way. Through,

(a) His strong passions.

(b) His immature judgment.

(c) His inexperience.

(d) His rash self sufficiency.

(e) His light companions, and,

(f) His general heedlessness.

2. The circumspection he should use to cleanse his way. "Taking heed, "

(a) Of his evil propensities.

(b) Of his companions.

(c) Of his pursuits.

(d) Of the tendencies of all he does.

3. The infallible guide by which his circumspection is to be regulated: "according to thy word" — that is to say,

(a) Its precepts.

(b) Its examples.

(c) Its motives.

(d) Its warnings.

(e) Its allurements. — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:10\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee.** His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person. This is a right royal search and pursuit, and well may it be followed with the whole heart. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God himself, and to endeavour to abide in fellowship with him. Up to the good hour in which he was speaking to his Lord, the Psalmist had been an eager seeker after the Lord, and if faint, he was still pursuing. Had he not sought the Lord he would never have been so anxious to cleanse his way.

It is pleasant to see how the writer's heart turns distinctly and directly to God. He had been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the presence of his God that he speaks to him, and prays to him as to one who is near. A true heart cannot long live without fellowship with God.

His petition is founded on his life's purpose: he is seeking the Lord, and he prays the Lord to prevent his going astray in or from his search. It is by obedience that we follow after God, hence the prayer,

**O let me not wander from thy commandments**; for if we leave the ways of God's appointment we certainly shall not find the God who appointed them. The more a man's whole heart is set upon holiness the more does he dread falling into sin; he is not so much fearful of deliberate transgression as of inadvertent wandering: he cannot endure a wandering look, or a rambling thought, which might stray beyond the pale of the precept. We are to be such wholehearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our wholeheartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness.

Two things may be very like and yet altogether different: saints are "strangers" — "I am a stranger in the earth" (Ps 119:19), but they are not wanderers: they are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct; they are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men; but yet they have not lost their way.

The man of God exerts himself, but does not trust himself: his heart is in his walking with God: but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them: hence the prayer, *"O let me not wander."* Still, this sense of need was never turned into an argument for idleness; for while he prayed to be kept in the right road he took care to run in it with his whole heart seeking the Lord.

It is curious again to note how the second part of the Psalm keeps step with the first; for where Ps 119:2 pronounces that man to be blessed who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, the present verse claims the blessing by pleading the character: **With my whole heart** **have I sought thee.**

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee.** There are very few of us that are able to say with the prophet David that we have sought God with our whole heart; to wit, with such integrity and pureness that we have not turned away from that mark as from the most principal thing of our salvation. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee.** Sincerity is in every expression; the heart is open before God. The young man can so speak to the Searcher of hearts... Let us consider the directness of this kind of converse with God. We use round about expressions in drawing nigh to God. We say, With my whole heart would I seek thee. We are afraid to be direct... See how decided in his conscious acting is the young man before you, how open and confiding he is, and such you will find to be the characteristic of his pious mind throughout the varied expressions unfolded in this Psalm. Here he declares to the Omniscient One that he had sought him with all his heart. He desired to realize God in everything. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 10** (*first clause*). God alone sees the heart; the heart alone sees God. *John Donne,* 1573-1631.

**Ver. 10. O let me not wander from thy commandments.** David after he had protested that he sought God with his whole heart, besought God that he would not suffer him to decline from his commandments. Hereby let us see what great need we have to call upon God, to the end he may hold us with a mighty strong hand. Yea, and though he hath already mightily put to his healing hand, and we also know that he hath bestowed upon us great and manifest graces; yet this is not all: for there are so many vices and imperfections in our nature, and we are so feeble and weak that we have very great need daily to pray unto him, yea, and that more and more, that he will not suffer us to decline from his commandments. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 10.** The more experience a man hath in the ways of God, the more sensible is he of his own readiness to wander insensibly, by ignorance and inadvertency, from the ways of God; but the young soldier dares run hazards, ride into his adversary's camp, and talk with temptation, being confident he cannot easily go wrong; he is not so much in fear as David who here cries, **O let me not wander.** *David Dickson,* 1583-1662.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 10.** —

1. A grateful review.

2. An anxious forecast.

3. A commendable prayer.

**Ver. 10. — The believer's two great solicitudes.**

1. What he is anxious to find: "I have sought thee."

2. What he is afraid of losing: "Thy commandments." — *W. D.*

**Ver. 10. — Sincerity not self sufficiency.**

1. The believer must be conscious of wholeheartedness in seeking God.

2. But consciousness of sincerity does not warrant self sufficiency.

3. The most wholehearted seeker must still look to divine grace to keep him from wandering. — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:11\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 11.** When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin.

**Thy word have I hid in mine heart.** His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God, — all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. He did not wear a text on his heart as a charm, but he hid it in his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

**That I might not sin against thee.** Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said, — Here is the best thing— "thy word"; hidden in the best place, — "in my heart; "for the best of purposes, — "that I might not sin against thee." This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves, — in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls.

A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee." He speaks to *God*, he loves the word because it is *God's* word, and he hates sin because it is sin against *God* himself. If he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word.

The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: "With my whole heart have *I* sought thee." Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: "That *I* might not sin against thee." This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done: many are great at promising, but the Psalmist had been true in performing: hence he hoped to see a sure result. When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin.

The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Ps 119:3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (Ps 119:3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart piety founded on the Scriptures.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin** **against thee.** There laid up in the heart the word has effect. When young men only read the letter of the Book, the word of promise and instruction is deprived of much of its power. Neither will the laying of it up in the mere memory avail. The word must be known and prized, and laid up in the heart; it must occupy the affection as well as the understanding; the whole mind requires to be impregnated with the word of God. Revealed things require to be seen. Then the word of God in the heart— the threatenings, the promises, the excellencies of God's word— and God himself realized, the young man would be inwardly fortified; the understanding enlightened, conscience quickened— he would not sin against his God. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin** **against thee.** In proportion as the word of the King is present in the heart, "*there* is power" against sin (Ec 8:4). Let us use this means of absolute power more, and more life and more holiness will be ours. *Frances Ridley Havergal,* 1836-1879.

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart.** It is fit that the word, being "more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold, "a peerless pearl, should not be laid up in the porter's lodge only— the outward ear; but even in the cabinet of the mind. *Dean Boys, quoted by James Ford.*

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart.** There is great difference between Christians and worldlings. The worldling hath his treasures in jewels without him; the Christian hath them within. Neither indeed is there any receptacle wherein to receive and keep the word of consolation but the heart only. If thou have it in thy mouth only, it shall be taken from thee; if thou have it in thy book only, Thou shalt miss it when thou hast most to do with it; but if thou lay it up in thy heart, as Mary did the words of the angel, no enemy shall ever be able to take it from thee, and thou shalt find it's comfortable treasure in time of thy need. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart.** This saying, to *hide,* imports that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make a glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him. He never looked to worldly creatures; but being content that he had so great a treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him would so surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away. Saint Paul also declareth unto us (1Ti 1:19) that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid is a good conscience. For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience have lost also their faith, and *have been robbed thereof. As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in hazard, without shutting a door, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in and to rob and spoil him of all; even so, if we leave at random to Satan the treasures which God hath given us in his word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of, our heart as David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof. John Calvin.*

**Ver. 11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart.** — Remembered, approved, delighted in it. *William Nicholson on* (1671), *in "David's Harp Strung and* *Tuned."*

**Ver. 11. Thy word.** The *saying*, thy oracle; any communication from God to the soul, whether promise, or command, or answer. It means a direct and distinct message, while "word" is more general, and applies to the whole revelation. This is the ninth of the ten words referring to the revelation of God in this Psalm. *James G. Murphy,* 1875.

**Ver. 11. In my heart.** Bernard observes, bodily bread in the cupboard may he eaten of mice, or moulder and waste: but when it is taken down into the body, it is free from such danger. If God enable thee to take thy soul food into thine heart, it is free from all hazards. *George Swinnock,* 1627-1673.

**Ver. 11. That I might not sin against thee.** Among many excellent virtues of the word of God, this is one: that if we keep it in our heart, it keeps us from sin, which is against God and against ourselves. We may mark it by experience, that the word is first stolen either out of the mind of man, and the remembrance of it is away; or at least out of the affection of man; so that the reverence of it is gone, before that a man can be drawn to the committing of a sin. So long as Eve kept by faith the word of the Lord, she resisted Satan; but from the time she doubted of that, which God made most certain by his word, at once she was snared. *William Cowper.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.**

**Ver. 11.** — The best thing, in the best place, for the best of purposes.

**Psalms 119:12\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 12. Blessed art thou, O LORD.** These are words of adoration arising out of an intense admiration of the divine character, which the writer is humbly aiming to imitate. He blesses God for all that he has revealed to him, and wrought in him; he praises him with warmth of reverent love, and depth of holy wonder. These are also words of perception uttered from a remembrance of the great Jehovah's infinite happiness within himself. The Lord is and must be blessed, for he is the perfection of holiness; and this is probably the reason why this is used as a plea in this place. It is as if David had said— I see that in conformity to thyself my way to happiness must lie, for thou art supremely blessed; and if I am made in my measure like to thee in holiness, I shall also partake in thy blessedness.

No sooner is the word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the word is received into the soul, the first prayer is— Lord, teach me its meaning.

**Teach me thy statutes**; for thus only can I learn the way to be blessed. Thou art so blessed that I am sure thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of thee that. I may be instructed in thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to whom he made supplication. Lord, thou art blessed, therefore bless me by teaching me.

We need to be disciples or learners— *"teach me; "*but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is David to beg the blessed God to teach him! Yet the Lord put the desire into his heart when the sacred word was hidden there, and so we may be sure that he was not too bold in expressing it. Who would not wish to enter the school of such a Master to learn of him the art of holy living? To this Instructor we must submit ourselves if we would practically keep the statutes of righteousness. The King who ordained the statutes knows best their meaning, and as they are the outcome of his own nature he can best inspire us with their spirit. The petition commends itself to all who wish to cleanse their way, since it is most practical, and asks for teaching, not upon recondite lore, but upon statute law. If we know the Lord's statutes we have the most essential education.

Let us each one say, *"Teach me thy statutes."* This is a sweet prayer for everyday use. It is a step above that of Ps 119:10, "O let me not wander, "as that was a rise beyond that of Ps 119:8, "O forsake me not utterly." It finds its answer in Ps 119:98-100: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, " etc.: but not till it had been repeated even to the third time in the "Teach me" of Ps 119:33,66, all of which I beg my reader to peruse. Even after this third pleading the prayer occurs again in so many words in Ps 119:124,139, and the same longing conics out near the close of the Psalm in Ps 119:171 — "My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 12. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.** This verse contains a prayer, with the reason of the prayer. The prayer is, *"Teach me thy statutes"*; the reason, moving him to seek this, ariseth of a consideration of that infinite good which is in God. He is a blessed God, the fountain of all felicity, without whom no welfare or happiness can be to the creature. And for this cause David earnestly desiring to be in fellowship and communion with God, which he knows none can attain unto unless he be taught of God to know God's way and walk in it; therefore, I say, he prayeth the more earnestly that the Lord would teach him his statutes. Oh that we also could wisely consider this, that our felicity stands in fellowship with God. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 12.** In this verse we have two things, 1. An acknowledgment of God's blessedness, **Blessed art thou, O LORD**; *i.e.*, being possessed of all fulness, thou hast an infinite complacency in the enjoyment of thyself; and thou art he alone in the enjoyment of whom I can be blessed and happy; and thou art willing and ready to give out of thy fulness, so that thou art the fountain of blessedness to thy creatures. 2. A request or petition, **Teach me thy statutes**; *q.d.*, seeing thou hast all fulness in thyself, and art sufficient to thy own blessedness; surely thou hast enough for me. There is enough to content thyself, therefore enough to satisfy me. This encourages me in my address.

Again, — Teach me that I may know wherein to seek my blessedness and happiness, even in thy blessed self; and that I may know how to come by the enjoyment of thee, so that I may be blessed in thee. Further, — Thou art blessed originally, the Fountain of all blessing; thy blessedness is an everlasting fountain, a full fountain; always pouring out blessedness: O, let me have this blessing from thee, this drop from the fountain. *William Wisheart, in "Theologia, or, Discourses of God, "*1716.

**Ver. 12.** Since God is blessed, we cannot but desire to learn his ways. If we see any earthly being happy, we have a great desire to learn out his course, as thinking by it we might be happy also. Every one would sail with that man's wind who prospereth; though in earthly things it holdeth not alway: yet a blessed God cannot by any way of his bring to other than blessedness. Thus, he who is blessedness itself, he will be ready to communicate his ways to other: the most excellent things are most communicative. *Paul Bayne.*

**Ver. 12. Teach me.** He had Nathan, he had priests to instruct him, himself was a prophet; but all their teaching was nothing without God's blessing, and therefore he prays, *"Teach me."* *William Nicholson.*

**Ver. 12. Teach me.** These words convey more than the simple imparting of knowledge, for he said before he had such, when he said he hid God's words in his heart; and in Ps 119:7 he said he *"had learned the judgments of his justice"*: it includes grace to observe his law. *Robert Bellarmine,* 1542-1621.

**Ver. 12. Teach me.** If this were practised now, to join prayer with hearing, that when we offer ourselves to be taught of men, we would there with send up prayer to God, before preaching, in time of preaching and after preaching, we would soon prove more learned and religious than we are. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 12. Teach me thy statutes.** Whoever reads this Psalm with attention must observe in it one great characteristic, and that is, how decisive are its statements that in keeping the commandments of God nothing can be done by human strength; but that it is he who must create the will for the performance of such duty. The Psalmist entreats the Lord to open his eyes that he may behold the wondrous things of the law, to teach him his statutes, to remove from him the way of lying, to incline his heart unto his testimonies, and not to covetousness, to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth. Each of these petitions shows how deeply impressed he was of his entire helplessness as regarded himself, and how completely dependent upon God he felt himself for any advancement he could hope to make in the knowledge of the truth. All his studies in the divine law, all his aspirations after holiness of life, he was well assured could never meet with any measure of success, except by the grace of God preventing and cooperating, implanting in him a right desire, and acting as an infallible guide, whereby alone he would be enabled to arrive at the propel sense of Holy Scripture, as welt as to correct principles of action in his daily walk before God and man. *George Phillips,* 1846.

**Ver. 12. Teach me thy statutes.** If it be asked wily the Psalmist entreats to be taught, when he has just before been declaring his knowledge, the answer is that he seeks instruction as to the practical working of those principles which he has learnt theoretically. *Michael Ayguan* (1416), *in Neale and Littledale.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.**

**Ver. 12.** — The blessedness of God, and the mode of entering into it.

**Ver. 12.** —

1. David gives glory to God: "Blessed art thou, 0 LORD."

2. He asks grace from God. — *Matthew Henry.*

**Ver. 12.** —

1. What it is, or how God doth teach us.

(a) God doth teach us outwardly; by his ordinances, by the

ministry of men.

(b) Inwardly; by the inspiration and work of the Holy

Ghost.

2. The necessity of his teaching.

3. The benefit and utility of it. — *T. Manton.*

**Ver. 12. — Desire for Divine Teaching excited by the Recognition of** **Divine Blessedness.**

1. Unveil in some inadequate degree the happiness of the ever blessed God, arising from his purity, benevolence, love.

2. Show the way in which man may become partaker of that blessedness by conformity to his precepts.

3. Utter the prayer of the text. — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:13\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy** **mouth.** The taught one of Ps 119:12 is here a teacher himself. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops. So had the Psalmist done. As much as he had known he had spoken. God has revealed many of his judgments by his mouth, that is to say, by a plain and open revelation; these it is out duty to repeat, becoming, as it were, so many exact echoes of his one infallible voice. There are judgments of God which are a great deep, which he does not reveal, and with these it will be wise for us not to intermeddle. What the Lord has veiled it would be presumption for us to uncover; but, on the other hand, what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to conceal. It is a great comfort to a Christian in time of trouble when in looking back upon his past life he can claim to have done his duty by the word of God. To have been, like Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is a great joy when the floods are rising, and the ungodly world is about to be destroyed. Lips which have been used in proclaiming God's statutes are sure to be acceptable when pleading God's promises. If we have had such regard to that which cometh out of God's mouth that we have published it far and wide, we may rest quite as assured that God will have respect unto the prayers which come out of our mouths.

It will be an effectual method of cleansing a young man's way if he addicts himself continually to preaching the gospel. He cannot go far wrong in judgment whose whole soul is occupied in setting forth the judgments of the Lord. By teaching we learn; by training the tongue to holy speech we master the whole body; by familiarity with the divine procedure we are made to delight in righteousness; and thus in a threefold manner our way is cleansed by our proclaiming the way of the Lord.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 13. With my lips have I declared,** etc. Above all, be careful to talk of that to others which you do daily learn yourself, and out of the abundance of your heart speak of good things unto men. *Richard Greenham.*

**Ver. 13.** Having hid the purifying word in his heart, the Psalmist will *declare it with his lips*;and as it is so pure throughout, he will declare all in it, without exception. When the fountain of the heart is purified, the streams from the lips will be pure also. The declaring lips of the Psalmist are here placed in antithesis to the mouth of Jehovah, by which the judgments were originally pronounced. *F. G. Marchant.*

**Ver. 13.** As the consciousness of having communicated our knowledge and our spiritual gifts is a means of encouragement to seek a greater measure, so it is an evidence of the sincerity and fruitfulness of what knowledge we have: **Teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I** **declared all the judgments of thy mouth.** *David Dickson.*

**Ver. 13. With my lips,** etc. The tongue is a most excellent member of the body, being well used to the glory of God and the edification of others; and yet it cannot pronounce without help of the lips. The Lord hath made the body of man with such marvellous wisdom, that no member of it can say to another, I have no need of thee; but such is man's dulness, that he observes not how useful unto him is the smallest member in the body, till it be taken from him. If our lips were clasped for a time, and our tongue thus shut up, we would esteem it a great mercy to have it loosed again; as that cripple, when he found the use of his feet, leaped for joy and glorified God. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 13. Declared all the judgments.** He says in another place (Ps 36:6), *"Thy judgments are like a great deep."* As the apostle says (Ro 11:33-34), *"O the depth of the wisdom and* *knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways* *past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord?"* If the judgments are unsearchable, how then says the prophet, *"I have* *declared all the judgments of thy mouth"?* We answer, — peradventure there are judgments of God which are not the judgments of his mouth, but of his heart and hand only.

We make a distinction, for we have no fear that the sacred Scripture weakens itself by contradictions. It has not said, The judgments of his mouth are a great deep; but *"Thy judgments."* Neither has the apostle said, The unsearchable judgments of his mouth: but *"His unsearchable judgments."* We may regard the judgments of God, then, as those hidden ones which he has not revealed to us; but the judgments of his mouth, those which he has made known, and has spoken by the mouth of the prophets. *Ambrose,* 340-397.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 13. — Speech fitly employed.** It is occupied with a choice subject, a full subject, a subject profitable to men, and glorifying to God.

**Psalms 119:14\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.** Delight in the word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, and so is cleansing the life. The Psalmist not only says that he does rejoice, but that he has rejoiced. For years it had been his joy and bliss to give his soul to the teaching of the word. His rejoicing had not only arisen out of the word of God, but out of the practical characteristics of it. The Way was as dear to him as the Truth and the Life. There was no picking and choosing with David, or if indeed he did make a selection, he chose the most practical first.

**As much as in all riches.** He compared his intense satisfaction with God's will with that of a man who possesses large and varied estates, and the heart to enjoy them. David knew the riches that come of sovereignty and which grow out of conquest; he valued the wealth which proceeds from labour, or is gotten by inheritance: he knew "all riches." The gracious king had been glad to see the gold and silver poured into his treasury that he might devote vast masses of it to the building of the Temple of Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He rejoiced in all sorts of riches consecrated and laid up for the noblest uses, and yet the way of God's word had given him more pleasure than even these. Observe that his joy was personal, distinct, remembered, and abundant. Wonder not that in the previous verse he glories in having spoken much of that which he had so much enjoyed: a man may well talk of that which is his delight.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,** etc. The Psalmist saith not only, "I have rejoiced in thy testimonies, "but, "in the *way* of thy testimonies." Way is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, "the way which thy testimonies point out, and call me unto"; or else his own practice, as a man's course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: *"in the way of thy testimonies."* He tells us the degree of his joy, **as much as in all riches:** "as much, "not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but "as much, "because we have no higher comparison. This is that which worldlings dote upon, and delight in; now as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare his own delight in the word, with his own delight in wealth; but his own choice and delight, with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David who was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, land, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and all men severally do possess; yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mr 8:36). *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 14. The way of thy testimonies.** The testimony of God is his word, for it testifies his will; the *"way"* of his testimony is the practice of his word, and doing of that which he hath declared to be his will, and wherein he hath promised to show us his love. David found not this sweetness in hearing, reading, and professing the word only; but in practising of it: and in very deed, the only cause why we find not the comfort that is in the word of God is that we practise it not by walking in the way thereof. It is true, at the first it is bitter to nature, which loves carnal liberty, to render itself as captive to the word: *laboriosa virtutis via*, and much pains must be taken before the heart be subdued; but when it is once begun, it renders such joy as abundantly recompenses all the former labour and grief. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 14.** Riches are acquired with difficulty, enjoyed with trembling, and lost with bitterness. *Bernard,* 1091-1157.

**Ver. 14.** A poor, good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christian's Bibles, "I cannot part with my Bible; I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard a profitable sermon, he says, "Methinks it does me good at heart; it is the greatest nourishment I have": **I have rejoiced in the way of** **thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.** *Oliver Heywood,* 1629-1702.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.**

**Ver. 14. — Practical religion, the source of a comfort surpassing** **riches.** It gives a man ease of mind, independence of carriage, weight of influence, and other matters supposed to arise out of wealth.

**Ver. 14.** —

1. The subject of rejoicing. Not the "testimonies" merely, but their observances, "the way of, "etc.

2.. The rejoicing in that subject.

(a) In its inward peace.

(b) In its external consequences.

3. The degree of the rejoicing: "as much as, "etc. — *G.R.*

**Ver. 14. — The two scales of the balance.** Whatever riches are good for, God's testimonies are good for.

1. Riches are desirable as the means of procuring the necessaries of life; but God's testimonies supply the necessities of the soul.

2. Riches are desirable as a means of procuring personal enjoyment; but God's testimonies produce the highest joy.

3. Riches are desirable as a means of attaining personal improvement; but God's testimonies are the highest educators.

4. Riches are desirable as a means of doing good; but God's testimonies work the highest good. — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:15\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts.** He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. As the miser often returns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced, "is the same who adds, "I will meditate." No spiritual exercise is more profitable to the soul than that of devout meditation; why are many of us so exceeding slack in it? It is worthy of observation that the preceptory part of God's word was David's special subject of meditation, and this was the more natural because the question was still upon his mind as to how a young man should cleanse his way. Practical godliness is vital godliness.

**And have respect unto thy ways,** that is to say, I will think much about them so as to know what thy ways are; and next; I will think much of them so as to have thy ways in great reverence and high esteem. I will see what thy ways are towards me that I may be filled with reverence, gratitude, and love; and then I will observe what are those ways which thou hast prescribed for me, thy ways in which thou wouldest have me follow thee; these I would watch carefully that I may become obedient, and prove myself to be a true servant of such a Master.

Note how the verses grow more *inward* as they proceed: from the speech of Ps 119:13 we advanced to the manifested joy of Ps 119:14, and now we come to the secret meditation of the happy spirit. The richest graces are those which dwell deepest.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts,** etc. All along David had shown what he had done; now, what he will do. Ps 119:10, "I have sought"; Ps 119:11, "I have hid"; Ps 119:12, "I have declared"; Ps 119:14, "I have rejoiced." Now in the two following verses he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come. *"I will meditate in thy precepts, "*etc. We do not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose, to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build, and leave unfinished, is an argument of folly. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 15. I will meditate in thy precepts.** Not only of thy precepts or concerning them, but in them, while engaged in doing them. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Ver. 15. I will.** See this "I will" repeated again and again (Ps 119:48,78). In meditation it is hard (sometimes at least) to take off our thoughts from the pre-engagements of other subjects, and apply them to the duty. But it is harder to become duly serious in acting in it, harder yet to dive and ponder; and hardest of all to continue in an abode of thoughts, and dwell long enough, and after views to make reviews, to react the same thinking, to taste things over and over, when the freshness and newness is past, when by long thinking the things before us seem old. We are ready to grow dead and flat in a performance except we stir up ourselves often in it. It is hard to hold on and hold up, unless we hold up a wakeful eye, a warm affection, a strong and quick repeated resolution; yea, and without often lifting up the soul to Christ for fresh recruits of strength to hold on. David, that so excellent artist in this way, saith he *will* *meditate*, he often saith *he will*. Doubtless, he not only said "I will" when he was to make his entrance into this hard work; but likewise for continuance in it, to keep up his heart from flagging, till he well ended his work. It is not the digging into the golden mine, but the digging long, that finds and fetches up the treasure. It is not the diving into the sea, but staying longer, that gets the greater quantity of pearls. To draw out the golden thread of meditation to its due length till the spiritual ends be attained, this is a rare and happy attainment. *Nathanael Ranew,* 1670.

**Ver. 15. I will meditate.** How much our *"rejoicing in the* *testimonies"* of God would be increased by a more habitual meditation upon them! This is, however, a resolution which the carnal mind can never be brought to make, and to which the renewed mind through remaining depravity is often sadly reluctant. But it is a blessed employment, and will repay a thousand fold the difficulty of engaging the too backward heart in the duty. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 15.** Meditation is of that happy influence, it makes the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and the conversation greatly fruitful. *Nathanael Ranew.*

**Ver. 15. Meditate in, thy precepts.** Study the Scriptures. If a famous man do but write an excellent book, O how we do long to see it! Or suppose I could tell you that there is in France or Germany a book that God himself wrote, I am confident men may draw all the money out of your purses to get that book. You have it by you: O that you would study it! When the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was studying the prophet Isaiah. He was not angry when Philip came and, as we would have thought, asked him a bold question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Ac 8:27-30); he was glad of it. One great end of the year of release was, that the law might be read (De 31:9-13). It is the wisdom of God that speaks in the Scripture (Lu 11:49); therefore, whatever else you mind, really and carefully study the Bible. *Samuel Jacomb* (1629-1659), *in The Morning Exercises.*

**Ver. 15. I will have respect.** The one is the fruit of the other: *"I will meditate"*; and then, *"I will have respect."* Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: "Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Jos 1:8). *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 15. And have respect unto thy ways.** — As an archer hath to his mark. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 15. Respect unto thy ways.** It is not without a peculiar pleasure, when travelling, that we *contemplate* the splendid buildings, the gardens, the fortifications, or the fine art galleries. But what are all these sights to the *contemplation of the ways of* *God*, which he himself has traversed, or has marked out for man? And what practical need there is that we consider the way, for else we shall be as a sleepy coachman, not carefully observant of the road, who may soon upset himself and his passengers. *Martin Geier.*

**Ver. 15. Thy ways.** David's second internal action concerning the word is consideration; where mark well, how by a most proper speech he calls the word of God the ways of God; partly, because by it God comes near unto men, revealing himself to them, who otherwise could not be known of them; for he dwells in light inaccessible; and partly, because the word is the *way* which leads men to God. So then, because by it God cometh down to men, and by it men go up unto God, and know how to get access to him, therefore is his word called his *way*. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 15-16.** The two last verses of this section present to us a threefold internal action of David's soul toward the word of God; first, meditation; secondly, consideration; thirdly, delectation: every one of these proceeds from another, and they mutually strengthen one another. Meditation brings the word to the mind; consideration views it and looks at length into it, whereof is bred delectation. That which comes into the mind, were it never so good, if it be not considered, goes as it came, leaving neither instruction nor joy; but being once presented by meditation, if it be pondered by consideration, then it breeds delectation, which is the perfection of godliness, in regard of the internal action. *William Cowper.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 15.** — The contemplative and active life; their common food, object, and reward.

**Psalms 119:16\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes.** In this verse delight follows meditation, of which it is the true flower and outgrowth. When we have no other solace, but are quite alone, it will be a glad thing for the heart to turn upon itself, and sweetly whisper, "I will delight myself. What if no minstrel sings in the hall, I will delight myself. If the time of the singing of birds has not yet arrived, and the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet I will delight myself." This is the choicest and noblest of all rejoicing; in fact, it is the good part which can never be taken from us; but there is no delighting ourselves with anything below that which God intended to be the soul's eternal satisfaction. The statute book is intended to be the joy of every loyal subject. When the believer once peruses the sacred pages his soul burns within him as he turns first to one and then to another of the royal words of the great King, words full and firm, immutable and divine.

**I will not forget thy word.** Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on (Ps 119:15), and that which they have often spoken of (Ps 119:13). Yet since we have treacherous memories it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of "I will not forget."

Note how two "I wills" follow upon two "I haves." We may not promise for the future if we have altogether failed in the past; but where grace has enabled us to accomplish something, we may hopefully expect that it will enable us to do more.

It is curious to observe how this verse is moulded upon Ps 119:8: the changes are rung on the same words, but the meaning is quite different, and there is no suspicion of a vain repetition. The same thought is never given over again in this Psalm; they are dullards who think so. Something in the position of each verse affects its meaning, so that even where its words are almost identical with those of another the sense is delightfully varied. If we do not see an infinite variety of fine shades of thought in this Psalm we may conclude that we are colour blind; if we do not hear many sweet harmonies, we may judge our ears to be dull of hearing, but we may not suspect the Spirit of God of monotony.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 16. I will delight myself,** etc. He protested before that he had great delight in the testimonies of God: now he saith he will still delight in them. A man truly godly, the more good he doth, the more he desires, delights and resolves to do. Temporisers, on the contrary, who have but a show of godliness, and the love of it is not rooted in their heart, how soon are they weary of well doing! If they have done any small external duty of religion, they rest as if they were fully satisfied, and there needed no more good to be done by them. True religion is known by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, by perseverance in well doing, and an earnest desire to do more.

But to this he adds that *he will not forget the word*. The graces of the Spirit do every one fortify and strengthen another; for ye see meditation helps consideration. Who can consider of that whereof he thinks not? Consideration again breeds delectation; and as here ye see, delectation strengthens memory: because he delights in the word he will not forget the word; and memory again renews meditation. Thus every grace of the Spirit helps another; and by the contrary, one of them neglected, works a wonderful decay of the remnant. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 16 I will delight myself** When righteousness, from a matter of constraint becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. The same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of his own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster; but obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the God of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence. *Thomas Chalmers,* 1780-1847.

**Ver. 16.** Meditation must not be a dull, sad, and dispirited thing: not a driving like the chariots of the Egyptians when their wheels were taken off, but like the chariots of Amminadib (So 6:12) that ran swiftly. So let us pray, — Lord, in meditation make me like the chariots of Amminadib, that my swift running may evidence my delight in meditating. Holy David makes delight such an ingredient or assistant here, that sometimes he calls the exercise of meditation by the name of *"delight, "*speaking in the foregoing verse of this meditation, *"I will meditate of thy precepts, "*and in Ps 119:16, **I will delight myself in thy statutes**; which is the same with meditation, only with superadding the excellent qualification due meditation should have; the name of delight is given to meditation because of its noble concomitant— holy joy and satisfaction. *Nathanael Ranew.*

**Ver. 16. Delight myself.** The word is very emphatic: evetva, *eshtaasha, I will skip about and jump for joy.* *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 16. I will not forget.** Delight prevents forgetfulness: the mind will run upon that which the heart delighteth in; and the heart is where the treasure is (Mt 6:21). Worldly men that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word, because it is not their delight. If anything displeases us, we are glad if we can forget it; it is some release from an inconvenience, to take off our thoughts from it; but it doubles the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in, to remember it, and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, hath no delight in his book, all that he learns is lost and forgotten, it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other: but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, **I will delight myself in thy statutes: I** **will not forget thy word.** *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 16. Forget.** I never yet heard of a covetous old man, who had forgotten where he had buried his treasure. *Cicero de Senectute.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 16.** —

1. What there is to be delighted in.

2. What comes of such delight: "I will never forget."

3. What comes of such memory— more delight.

**Psalms 119:17\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 17-24** In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist's mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case. As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy's country. His appeal is to God alone, and his prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

**Ver. 17. Deal bountifully with thy servant.** He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward. Let my wage be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service. The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger, .If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God's grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, "O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn."

**That I may live.** Without abundant mercy he could not live. It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are. Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord's bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. The Lord's servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.

**And keep thy word.** This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life. We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God's word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well being. Life is only worth keeping while we can keep God's word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live.

The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands. If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace. We work *for* him because he works *in* us. Thus we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this Psalm: Ps 119:1 blesses the holy man, Ps 119:9 asks how we can attain to such holiness, and Ps 119:17 traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing. The more a man prizes holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 17. Deal bountifully with thy servant,** etc. These words might be— Render unto thy servant, or upon thy servant. A deep signification seems to be here involved. The holy man will take the responsibility of being dealt with, not certainly as a mere sinful man, but as a man placing himself in the way appointed for reconciliation. Such we find to be the actual case, as you read in Ps 119:16, in the Part immediately preceding— "I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." Now, the statutes of the Lord referred preeminently to the sacrifices for sin, and the cleansing for purifications that were prescribed in the Law. You have to conceive of the man of God as being in the midst of the Levitical ritual, for which you find him making all preparations: 1 Chronicles 22-24. Placing himself, therefore, upon these, he would pray the Lord to deal with him according to them; or, as we, in New Testament language, would say, — placing himself on the great atonement, the believer would pray the Lord to deal with him according to his standing in Christ, which would be in graciousness or bounty. For if the Lord be just to condemn without the atonement, he is also just to pardon through the atonement; yea, he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 17. Deal bountifully,** etc. O Lord, I am constantly resolved to obey and adhere to thy known will all the days of my life: O make me those gracious returns which thou hast promised to all such. *Henry Hammond.*

**Ver. 17. Deal bountifully... that I may keep thy word,** etc. A faithful servant should count his by past service richly rewarded by being employed yet more in further service, as this prayer teacheth; for David entreats that he may live and keep God's word. *David Dickson.*

**Ver. 17. Bountifully.** And indeed, remembering what a poor, weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a *bountiful* supply of grace can answer the emergency. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 17. Thy servant.** That he styles himself so frequently the servant of God notes the reverent estimation he had of his God, in that he accounts it more honourable to be called the servant of God who was above him than the king of a mighty, ancient, and most famous people that were under him. And indeed, since the angels are styled his ministers, shall men think it a shame to serve him? and especially since he of his goodness hath made them our servants, "ministering spirits" to us? Should we not joyfully serve him who hath made all his creatures to serve us, and exempted us from the service of all other, and hath only bound us to serve himself? *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 17. That I may live.** As a man must *"live"* in order to work, the first petition is, that God would *"deal with his* *servant, "*according to the measure of grace and mercy, enabling him to *"live"* the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man. *George Horne,* 1730-1792.

**Ver. 17. That I may live, and keep thy word.** David joins here two together, which whosoever disjoins cannot be blessed. He desires to live; but so to live that he may keep God's word. To a reprobate man, who lives a rebel to his Maker, it had been good (as our Saviour said of Judas) that he had never been born. The shorter his life is, the fewer are his sins and the smaller his judgments. But to an elect man, life is a great benefit; for by it he goes from election to glorification, by the way of sanctification. The longer he lives, the more good he doth, to the glory of God, the edification of others, and confirmation of his own salvation; making it sure to himself by wrestling and victory in temptations, and perseverance in well doing. *William Cowper.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

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

**Ver. 17-24. — Divine bounties desired**. Life, for godly service (Ps 119:17). Illumination (Ps 119:18). Guidance homeward for the stranger ("thy commandments") (Ps 119:19-20), and, glancing at the proud who err from this guidance (Ps 119:21), the Psalmist prays for removal of the "reproach" entailed by fidelity to God (Ps 119:22-24).

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 17.** —

1. A bountiful master.

2. A needy servant— begging for very life.

3. A suitable recompense: "and keep thy word."

**Ver. 17.** — We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. — *Matthew Henry.*

**Psalms 119:18\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 18. Open thou mine eyes.** This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty.

**That l may behold wondrous things out of thy law.** Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given.

The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men among the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes"; but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to Ps 119:10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander, "and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee, "and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 18. Open thou mine eyes.** Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes? Certainly, no one; for "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, *"Open thou mine eyes, "*etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened, — hence it is written, *"That I may live and keep thy* *word";* and then, *"Open thou mine eyes."* *Paulus Palanterius.*

**Ver. 18. Open thou mine eyes.** "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. "Lord! that I may receive my sight, "was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, *"Open thou mine eyes"*; and both in this and the preceding petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, "we see at once who prompted the prayer. *Barton Bouchier.*

**Ver. 18. Open thou mine eyes.** If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 18. Open thou mine eyes.** The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord *open mine eyes*:blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2Pe 1:19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you *mysteria*, but *monstra*, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20). The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifieth *"unveil mine eyes."* There is a double work, negative and positive. There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light. Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Ac 9:18). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 18.** The Psalmist asks for no new revelation. It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eye sight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them. These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to *ourselves*. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul. God gives "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened." (Eph 1:17) It is important to remember this also, for here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness (Joh 9:6). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid (Ac 8:26-40) or instruct us himself. But it is only to patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain. The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow. The film of a fallen nature, self maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of his argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises. *John Ker, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense* *of Wonder, "*1877.

**Ver. 18.** O let us never forget; that the wonderful things contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man, "whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth. *John Morison,* 1829.

**Ver. 18. Uncover my eyes and I will look— wonders out of thy** **law.** The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. *"Out of thy law, "i.e.*, brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Ver. 18. Wondrous things.** Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what if was: "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (De 29:4). They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts. Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, **Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out** **of thy law.** And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye, then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand. *Joseph Caryl,* 1602-1673.

**Ver. 18.** "The word is very nigh" unto us; and, holding in our hand a document that teems with what is wonderful, the sole question is, "Have we an eye to its marvels, a heart for its mercies?" Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible; he only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or no we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or no the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise. Thus the wonderful things are already in the Bible. The Spirit who indited them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium, — by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding, — by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: **Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous** **things out of thy law.** *Henry Melvill,* 1798-1871.

**Ver. 18.** The **wondrous things** seem to be the great things of an eternal world— he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.

**Open mine eyes.** — David was not blind— his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching— the eye salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, *"Open thou mine eyes."* *Robert Murray Macheyne,* 1813-1843.

**Ver. 18. Wondrous things.** Wherefore useth he this word *"wondrous"*? It is as if he would have said, Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounts all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 18. Thy law.** That which is the object of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is hrwt. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into hrwt, Mybwtk, and Myaybg, or the "Law, "the "Psalms, "and the "Prophets, "Lu 24:44. Under that distribution Torah signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it were usually called "the Law, "Isa 8:20. By the *law*, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the *law*, in the Psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditates therein day and night, "Ps 1:2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the books thereof in that manner, Jos 1:8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience— that is, the holy Scripture.

In this law there are twalpg *"wonderful things."* alp signifies to be "wonderful, "to be "hidden, "to be "great" and "high; "that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence twalpg are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us as De 17:8, rkr Kmm alpy yk — "If a matter be too hard for thee, "hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, Ps 77:11 78:11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is" Wonderful, "Isa 9:6; for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him. *John Owen,* 1616-1683.

**Ver. 18. Wondrous things.** There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried, to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man (who lives in a modern house) and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room, and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titian, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah, "says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle, "and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it." But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with. *Henry Ward Beecher,* 1872.

**Ver. 18. That I may behold wondrous things.** The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist's time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration, — its power of meeting man's faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man... That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire. *John Ker.*

**Ver. 18. Wondrous things out of thy law.** In 118 we had the "wondrous" character of redemption; in 119 we have the "wonders" (Ps 119:18,27,129), of God's revelation. *William Kay,* 1871.

**Ver. 18-19.** When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning, saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for; — **Open thou mine eyes that I may see the** **wonders of the Law;** and (Ps 119:19) **hide not thy** **commandments from me.** And Christ saith, "If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" so that then we shall see the secrets of God. *Richard Stock,* (1626).

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 18.** —

1. The precious casket: "thy law."

2. The invisible treasure: "wondrous things."

3. The miraculous eyesight: "that I may behold."

4. The divine oculist: "Open thou mine eyes."

**Ver. 18. — The hidden wonders of the gospel.** There are many hidden things in nature; many in our fellow men; so there are many in the Bible. The things of the Bible are hidden because of the blindness of Man.

1. *The blind man's sorrow*:"Open mine eyes." I cannot see. I have eyes and see not. The pain of this conscious blindness when a man really feels it.

2. *The blind man's conviction*:"That I may behold wondrous, "etc. There are wondrous things there to be seen. I am sure of it. There is a wonderful view,

(a) of sin;

(b) of hell, as its desert;

(c) of One ready to save;

(d) of perfect pardon;

(e) of God's love:

(f) of all sufficient grace;

(g) of heaven.

3. *The blind man's wisdom.* The fault is in my eyes, not in thy word. "Open my eyes, "and all will be well. The reason for not seeing is because the eyes are blinded by sin. There is nothing wanting in the Bible.

4. *The blind man's prayer*:"Open thou mine eyes."

(a) I cannot open them.

(b) My dearest friends cannot.

(c) Only thou canst. "Lord, I pray thee, now open them."

Many seek to stop such praying. Be like Bartimaeus who

"cried so much the more."

5. *The blind man's anticipation*:"That I may behold."

(a) The joy of a cured blind man when he is about to behold,

for the first time, the beauties of nature.

(b) The joy of the spiritually healed when they begin

"looking unto Jesus."

(c) The personal character of the joy: "Open thou mine eyes,

that I may behold." I have hitherto had to see through the

eyes of others. I would depend on other eyes no longer.

The glad anticipation of Job: "Whom I shall see for

myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." — *Frederick G. Marchant,* 1882.

**Ver. 18. — God's word suited to man's sense of wonder.**

1. We shall make some remarks on the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. One of the first causes of wonder is the new or unexpected. The second source is to be found in things beautiful and grand. A third source is the mysterious which surrounds man— there are things unknowable.

2. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in his revealed word. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the new and unexpected to us; it sets before us things beautiful and grand. If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to awe, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this.

3. The means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded — the prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide— "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." — *John Ker, of Glasgow,* 1877.

**Ver. 18. — Wondrous sights for opened eyes.**

1. The wondrous things in God's law. A wondrous rule of life. A wondrous curse against transgression. A wondrous redemption from the curse shadowed forth in the ceremonial law.

2. Special eyesight needed to behold them. They are spiritual things. Men are spiritually blind. 1Co 2:14.

3. Personal prayer to the Great Opener of eyes. — *C.A.D.*

**Psalms 119:19\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth.** This is meant for a plea. By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The Psalmist was a stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are: he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven. Therefore he pleads,

**Hide not thy commandments from me.** If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest? David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to— understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case, — in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend.

This prayer is a supplement to "open thou mine eyes", and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and to plead for it from every point of view. The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone.

Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave: "Thy word have I hid, ""Hide not thy commandments from me." This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding *in* and hiding *from*.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth.** David had experience of peace and war, of riches and poverty, of pleasure and woe. He had been a private and public person; a shepherd, a painful calling; a soldier, a bloody trade; a courtier, an honourable slavery, which joins together in one the lord and the parasite, the gentleman and the drudge; and he was a king, — a glorious name, filled up with fears and cares. All these he had passed through, and found least rest when he was at the highest, less content on the throne than in the sheepfolds. All this he had observed and laid up in his memory, and this his confession is an epitome and brief of all; and in effect he telleth us, that whatsoever he had seen in this his passage, whatsoever he had enjoyed, yet he found nothing so certain as this, — that he had found nothing certain, nothing that he could abide with or would abide with him, but that he was still as a passenger and *"stranger in the earth."* *Anthony Farindon,* 1596-1658.

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth,** etc. As a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; as *"a stranger"* he is fearful of losing his way; on these accounts he requests that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts by affording the light of heaven; that he would not *"hide his* *commandments, "*but show and teach him those steps, by which he may ascend toward heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory. *George Horne,* 1730-1792.

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth.** This confession from a solitary wanderer would have had little comparative meaning; but in the mouth of one who was probably surrounded with every source of worldly enjoyment, it shows at once the vanity of "earth's best joys, " and the heavenly tendency of the religion of the Bible. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth,** etc.

1. Every man here upon earth (especially a godly man) is but a stranger and a passenger.

2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a better and a more durable state. Every man should do so. A man's greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so. Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other (Col 3:2); heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance, that which is taken from the one is put into the other.

3. There is of sufficient direction how to obtain this durable estate, but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: "Life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:10). The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but as it is brought to light with most clearness in the word, so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God makes us wise to salvation, and which is our line and rule to heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state to consult with the word.

4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till God enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveys influence into our hearts. This is the light David begs when he says, *"Hide not thy commandments from me."* David was not ignorant of the Ten Commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use.

5. If we would have the Spirit we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the "Spirit to them that ask him" (Lu 11:13); and therefore we must say, as David, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Ps 43:33). *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth,** etc. When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may "see the little stranger." A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going— into the immensities again— into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

But the little stranger grows, and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling, becomes so "settled" that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now.

And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these— like a ship, from which many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honour, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then — just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great restful, sunny plain— lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. The voice, which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger, "who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is *settled*. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen, "and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are seen" are temporal, and go with time into extinction; while "those which are not seen, are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say— **I am a stranger in** **the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.** *Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary, and other* *Meditations."* 1872.

**Ver. 19. I am a stranger in the earth,** etc. In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the arguments to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him. *Robert Leighton,* 1611-1684.

**Ver. 19. In the earth.** He makes no exception here; the whole earth he acknowledged a place of his pilgrimage. Not only when he was banished among the Moabites and Philistines was he a stranger; but even when he lived peaceably at home in Canaan, still he thinks himself a stranger. This consideration moved godly Basil to despise the threatening of Modestus, the deputy of Valens the emperor, when he braved him with banishment. *Ab exilii metu liber sum, unam* *hominum cognoscens esse patram, paradisum omnem autem terram* *commune naturae exilium.* And it shall move us to keep spiritual sobriety in the midst of pleasures, if we remember that in our houses, at our own fireside, and in our own beds, we are but strangers, from which we must shortly remove, to give place to others. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 19. Hide not thy commandments from me.** The manner of David's reasoning is this. I am here a stranger and I know not the way, therefore, Lord, direct me. The similitude is taken from passengers, who coming to an uncouth country where they are ignorant of the way, seek the benefit of a guide. But the dissimilitude is here: in any country people can guide a stranger to the place where he would be; but the dwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven; and therefore David seeks no guide among them, but prays the Lord to direct him. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 19. Hide not thy commandments from me.** There is a hiding of the word of God when means to hear it explained by preachers are wanting; and there is a hiding of the comfortable and lively light of the Spirit, who must quicken the word into us. From both those evils we may, and we should, pray to be saved. *David Dickson.*

**Psalms 119:20\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy** **judgments at all times.** True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense, — they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings.

God's judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question. The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal.

"This is the Judge which ends the strife

Where wit and reason fail;

Our guide through devious paths of life,

Our shield when doubts assail." *Watts.*

David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough.

Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant; we should feel holy longings *"at all times."* Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name, — they are temporary emotions born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times.

Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. "My soul breaketh"; "my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the psalmist was so careful in composing.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh,** etc. Here is a protestation of that earnest desire he had to the obedience of the word of God; he amplifies it two ways: first, it was no light motion, but such as being deeply rooted made his heart to *break* when he saw that he could not do in the obedience thereof what he would. Next, it was no vanishing motion, like the morning dew; but it was permanent, *omni* *tempore*, he had it *at all times*. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh for the longing,** as one that with straining breaks a vein. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh,** etc. This breaking is by rubbing, chafing, or crushing. The spirit was so *fretted* with its yearning desire after the things which Jehovah had spoken, that it was broken as by heavy friction. The *"longing"* to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This *longing* continued with the Psalmist *"at all times, "*or "in every season." Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that *longing. "The wondrous things"* were so wonderful, and still so hidden. To see a little of "the beauty of the Lord" is to get to know how much there is which we fail to see, and thus to long more than ever. He who pursues ardently the wonders of the word of the Lord, will never set that *longing* at rest as long as he remains "in the earth." It is only when we shall "be like him, " and "shall see him as he is, "that we shall cry, "Enough, Lord!" "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." *F. G. Marchant.*

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh for the longing.** For the earnest desire. "That it hath *unto thy judgments at all times.*" Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful, or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with all that there is in the law of God. *Albert Barnes.*

**Ver. 20. My soul breaketh for the longing,** etc. The desire after God's appointments becomes painfully intense. A longing— an intense longing— for the judgments of the Lord— at all times. These are the particulars of his breaking soul. His whole mind is toward the things of God. He prays that he may behold the wondrous things of Jehovah's law, and that he may not hide his commandments from him; and here his soul breaks for longing towards his judgments at all times. The state of the Psalmist's mind would not lead us here to suppose that he was awaiting the manifestation of the Lord's judgments in vindicating his cause against ungodly men, or that he was longing for opportunity of fulfilling all the deeds of righteousness towards his fellow men; for this he was doing to the utmost. Evidently he is intent upon the ordinances of religion, which were called *"judgments"* in reference to the solemn sanctions with which they were enjoined. The man of God so longed to join with the Lord's people in these, that his heart was ready to break with desire, as he was forced from place to place in the wilderness. The renewed heart is here. Another might long to be delivered from persecution, to be at rest, to be restored to home, relations, and comfort. The man of God could not but desire those natural enjoyments; but, over all, his holy mind longed with ardour for the celebration of Jehovah's worship. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 20. Thy judgments.** God's judgments are of two sorts: first, his commands; so called because by them right is judged and discerned from wrong. Next, his plagues executed upon transgressors according to his word. David here refers to the first. Let men who have not the like of David's desire, remember, that they whose heart cannot break for transgressing God's word because they love it, shall find the plagues of God to bruise their body and break their heart also. Let us delight in the first sort of these judgments, and the second shall never come upon us. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 20.** Mark that word, **at all times.** Bad men have their good moods, as good men have their bad moods. A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times. *Thomas Brooks,* 1608-1680.

**Ver. 20. At all times.** Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comfort to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease, they despise it. But David made use of it *"at all times; "* in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair; in affliction, the word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 20. At all times.** How few are there even among the servants of God who know anything of the intense feeling of devotion here expressed! O that our cold and stubborn hearts were warmed and subdued by divine grace, that we might be ready to faint by reason of the longing which we had *"at all times"* for the judgments of our God. How fitful are our best feelings! If today we ascend the mount of communion with God, tomorrow we are in danger of being again entangled with the things of earth. How happy are they whose hearts are *"at all times"* filled with longings after fellowship with the great and glorious object of their love! *John Morison,* 1829.

**Ver. 20.** If you read the lives of good men, who have been, also, intellectually great, you will be struck, I think, even to surprise, a surprise, however, which will not be unpleasant, to find them, at the close of life, in their own estimation so ignorant, so utterly imperfect, so little the better of the long life lesson. Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word "desirousness, "and took as the text that best described his inner state, that passionate, almost painful cry of David, **My soul breaketh for the longing that it** **hath unto thy judgments.** But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! To be still learning at threescore years and ten! How beautiful seem the great men in their simplicity! *Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary, "*1872.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 20.** —

1. The word sought, and sought at all times.

2. The word sought, and sought with intense desire.

3. The word sought, and sought the more intensely the more it is found. It was because he had found so much in the word of the Lord already, that the soul of the Psalmist was breaking to find more. Those who have been once admitted to "the secret of the Lord" find their highest joy in knowing that secret still more fully. It is to those who know that secret that the promise is given: "He will show them his covenant:" Ps 25:14. — *F.G.M.*

**Ver. 20.** — One of the best tests of character and prophecies of what a man will be, are his longings.

1. *The saint's absorbing object*:"Thy judgments." The word here is synonymous with the "word" of God.

(a) The Psalmist greatly reverenced the word.

(b) He intensely desired to know its contents.

(c) He wishes to feed upon God's word.

(d) He longed to obey it.

(e) He longed to feel the power of God's judgments in his own

heart.

2. *The saint's ardent longings.*

(a) They constitute a living experience.

(b) The expression used in the text represents a humble

sense of imperfection.

(c) It indicates an advanced experience.

(d) It is an experience which we may term a bitter sweet.

(e) These longings may become very wearying to a man's

soul.

3. *Cheering reflections.*

(a) God is at work in your soul.

(b) The result of God's work is very precious.

(c) It is leading on to something more precious.

(d) The desire itself is doing you good.

(e) It makes Christ precious. See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No.

1586: "Holy Longings."

**Psalms 119:21\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 21. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.** This is one of God's judgments: he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea "In the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the naughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. Proud men are cursed men: nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves. In itself, pride is a plague and torment. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

**Which do err from thy commandments.** Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient.

God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils.

In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth, "and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 21. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.** If the proud escape here, as sometimes they do, hereafter they shall not; for, *"the proud man is an abomination to the Lord"*; Pr 16:5. *God cannot endure him;* Ps 101:5. And what of that? *Tu* *perdes superbos*, Thou shalt destroy the proud. The very heathens devised the proud giants struck with thunder from heaven. And *if* *God spared not the angels*, whom he placed in the highest heavens, *but* for their pride *threw them down headlong to the nethermost* *hell*, how much less shall he spare the proud dust and ashes of the sons of men, but shall cast them from the height of their earthly altitude to the bottom of that infernal dungeon! "Humility makes men angels; pride makes angels devils; "as that father said: I may well add, makes devils of men. Alazoneiav outiv ekfeugei dikhn, says the heathen poet, Menander; "Never soul escaped the revenge of pride, " never shall escape it. So sure as God is just, pride shall not go unpunished. I know now we are all ready to call for a bason, with Pilate, and to wash our hands from this foul sin. Honourable and beloved, this vice is a close one; it will cleave fast to you; yea, so close that ye can hardly discern it from a piece of yourselves: this is it that aggravates the danger of it. For, as Aquinas notes well, some sins are more dangerous *propter vehementiam impugnationis*, "for the fury of their assault"; as the sin of anger: others for their correspondence to nature; as the sins of lust: other, *propter* *latentiam sui,* "for their close skulking" in our bosom; as the sin of pride. Oh, let us look seriously into the corners of our false hearts, even with the lanthorn of God's law, and find out this subtle devil; and never give peace to our souls till we have dispossessed him. Down with your proud plumes, O ye glorious peacocks of the world: look upon your black legs, and your snake like head: be ashamed of your miserable infirmities: else, God will down with them and yourselves in a fearful vengeance. There is not the holiest of us but is this way faulty: oh, let us be humbled by our repentance, that we may not be brought down to everlasting confusion: let us be cast down upon our knees, that we may not be cast down upon our faces. For God will make good his own word, one way; "A man's pride shall bring him low." *Joseph Hall,* 1574-1656.

**Ver. 21. Thou hast rebuked the proud.** Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit the proud under the rebuke and curse of God. He abhors their persons and their offerings: he "knows them afar off": he "resisteth them": "he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts." Yet more especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb, — "which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." David and Hezekiah are instructive beacons in the church, that God's people, whenever they give place to the workings of a proud heart, must not hope to escape his rebuke. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions:" Ps 99:8. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 21. Thou hast rebuked the proud.** David addeth another reason whereby he is more enflamed to pray unto God and to address himself unto him to be taught in his word; to wit, when he seeth that he hath so, *"rebuked the proud."* For the chastisement and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious should be a good instruction for us; as it is said that God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness. It is not without cause that the prophet Isaiah also hath so said; for he signifieth unto us that God hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, alas, we shall soon become like unto brute beasts: if God lay the bridle on our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 21. The proud.** This is a style commonly given to the wicked; because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. From the time that pride entered into Adam's heart, that he would be higher than God had made him, he spared not to eat of the forbidden tree. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man's ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 21. The proud.** Peter speaks of the proud, as if they did challenge God like champions, and provoke him like rebels, so that unless he did resist them, they would go about to deprive him of his rule, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram undermined Moses. Nu 16:1-33.

For so the proud man saith, I will be like the highest, Isa 14:12-15, and, if he could, above the highest too. This is the creature that was taken out of the dust, Ge 2:7, and so soon as he was made, he opposed himself against that majesty which the angels adore, the thrones worship, the devils fear, and the heavens obey. How many sins are in this sinful world! and yet, as Solomon saith of the good wife, Pr 31:29, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but you surmount them all"; so may I say of pride, many sins have done wickedly, but you surmount them all; for the wrathful man, the prodigal man, the lascivious man, the surfeiting man, the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will have his own will though it be contrary to God's will. As the humble man saith, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory, Ps 115:1; so the proud man saith, Not unto Him, not unto Him, but unto us give the glory. Like unto Herod which took the name of God, and was honoured of all but the worms, and they showed that he was not a god, but a man, Ac 12:21. Therefore proud men may be called God's enemies, because as the covetous pull riches from men, so the proud pull honour from God. Beside, the proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honour, the voluptuous for pleasure, the envious for wrong, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud, but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, "I will not obey, " Ex 5:2. *Henry Smith,* 1560-1591.

**Ver. 21. Proud that are cursed.** — Proud men endure the curse of never having friends; not in prosperity, because they know nobody; not in adversity, because then nobody knows them. *John Whitecross, in "Anecdotes illustrative of the Old Testament."*

**Ver. 21.** This use of God's judgments upon others must we make to ourselves; first, that we may be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so may fear; and, next, that we may so behold his justice upon the proud that we may have assurance of his mercy to the humble. This is hard to flesh and blood; for some can be brought to rejoice at the destruction of others, and cannot fear; and others, when they are made to fear, cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments. *Richard Greenham.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 21.** —

1. The character of the proud.

2. God's dealings with them.

3. Our own relation to them.

**Ver. 21.** —

1. **The sin**; "Err from the commandments."

(a) By neglect; or,

(b) By abuse of them.

2. **Its origin** — pride: pride of reason, of heart, of life.

3. **Its punishment.**

(a) Rebuke.

(b) Condemnation. — *G.R.*

**Psalms 119:22\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 22. Remove from me reproach and contempt.** These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction. No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation, " is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem, "a good name is better than precious ointment." The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth. God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause.

**For I have kept thy testimonies.** Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a *locus standi* in the court and cannot be refused. If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right. God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord.

This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to Ps 119:6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies, "by which it chimes with Ps 119:14.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 22. Remove from me reproach and contempt.** Here 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 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 this burden lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed and foul words break no 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 any duty, or discouraged in it. *Matthew Henry*

**Ver. 22. Remove from me reproach and contempt,** etc. In the words (as in most of the other verses) you have, — 1. A request: **Remove** **from me reproach and contempt.** 2. A reason and argument to enforce the request: **For I have kept thy testimonies.**

First, for the request, **Remove from me reproach and contempt**; the word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me. And then the argument: **for I have kept thy** **testimonies.** The reason may be either thus: (1) He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions. (2) He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause, that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him. (3) It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God's word was not abated by this reproach, he still kept God's testimonies, how wicked soever he did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him, or he pleads that his respect to God and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.

The points from hence are many.

1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God's testimonies should be slandered and reproached.

2. As it is the usual lot of God's people to be reproached; so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear.

3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so may we, with submission to God's will.

4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful asserter of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from the entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology.

5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit; we must plead guilty when, by our own fault, we have given occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so, "Turn away my reproach, which I fear: for thy judgments are good" (Ps 119:39). "My reproach, "for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbled himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here: "*Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are* *good."* *Thomas Manton.*

**Psalms 119:23\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 23. Princes also did sit and speak against me.** David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scorner. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him: they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

**But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.** This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation. It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all. Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.

Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate, "and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to forget it. It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons of affliction.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 23. Princes also did sit,** under the shadow of justice, **and speak against me.** Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the taverns and inns, being there blazoned by dissolute jesters and scoffers, and talked of in the streets and market places; but even in the place of justice (which ought to be holy); it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be, as it were, a most wicked and cursed man. When David then did see that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he makes his complaint unto God, and says, "O Lord, the princes and governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me; *and yet for all that I have kept thy* *testimonies."* Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so fall out, when we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience? that we are falsely slandered, and accused of this and that whereof we never once thought; yet ought we to bear all things patiently; for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, whatever great protestation of our integrity and purity we may dare to make. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 23 But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.** As husbandmen, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water furrows to carry it away; so, when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter. But every diversion will not become saints, it must be a holy diversion: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (Ps 94:19). The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his ease in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; "*Thy* comforts, "— comforts of God's allowance, of God's providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it: but David, who was God's servant, must have God's comforts. So, elsewhere, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked: "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Ps 73:17). He goeth to divert his mind by the use of God's ordinances, and so cometh to be settled against the temptation. *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 23. But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.** — Perceive here the armour by which David fights against his enemy. *Arma* *justi quibus omnes adversariorum repellit impetus*, his weapons are the word and player. He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let us fight with the armour of God— the exercises of the word and prayer: for a man may peaceably rest in his secret chamber, and in these two see the miserable end of all those who are enemies to God's children for God's sake. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 23. Thy statutes.** It is impossible to live either *Christianly* or *comfortable* without the daily use of Scripture. It is absolutely necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. Without it our conscience is a blind guide, and leadeth us in a mist of ignorance, error, and confusion. Therein we hear God speaking to us, declaring his good will to us concerning our salvation, and the way of our obedience to meet him in his good will. What book can we read with such profit and comfort? For matter, it is wisdom: for authority, it is divine and absolute: for majesty, God himself under common words and letters expressing an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. Where shall we find our minds so enlightened, our hearts so deeply affected, our conscience so moved, both for casting us down and raising us up? I cannot find in all the books of the world, such an one speak to me, as in Scripture, with so absolute a conquest of all the powers of my soul.

Contemners of Scripture lack food for their souls, light for their life and weapons for their spiritual warfare; but the lovers of Scripture have all that furniture. Therein we hear the voice of our Beloved, we smell the savour of his ointments, and have daily access unto the art of propitiation. If in our knowledge we desire divinity, excellency, antiquity, and efficiency, we cannot find it, but in God's word alone. It is the extract of heavenly wisdom, which Christ the eternal Word brought out of the bosom of his Father. *William Struther,* 1633.

**Ver. 23-24.** The two last verses of this section contain two protestations of David's honest affection to the word. The first is, that albeit he was persecuted and evil spoken of, and that by great and honourable men of the world, such as Saul, and Abner, and Ahithophel; yet did he still meditate in the statutes of God. It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority. And that, first, by reason of their *place*:the greater *power* they have, the greater *peril* to encounter with their displeasure; therefore said Solomon, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death." Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil: Ro 13:3. And therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end: that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown, he becomes a favourer of evil men and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. And therefore it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when he gives a people good and religious rulers. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 23, 51.** If the 119th Psalm came from the pen of David, as multitudes believe, then I do not wonder that many have connected its composition with his residence in the school of the prophets of Naioth. The calm in which he then found himself, and the studies which he then prosecuted, might well have led his musings in the direction of that alphabetic code, while there are in it not a few expressions which, to say the least, may have particular reference to the dangers out of which he had so recently escaped, and by which he was still threatened. Such, for example, are the following: *"Princes* *also did sit and speak against me": but thy servant did meditate in* *thy statutes. "The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet* *have I not declined from thy law."* *William M. Taylor, in "David, King of Israel; his Life and its*

*Lessons."* 1880.

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 23. — Meditation.**

1. Our best employment while others slander.

2. Our best comfort under their falsehood.

3. Our best preservative from a spirit of revenge.

4. Our best mode of showing our superiority to their attacks.

**Psalms 119:24\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 24. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.** They were not only themes for meditation, but "also" sources of delight and means of guidance. While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not drive the bird from its nest with all their noise. It was their delight to slander and his delight to meditate. The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes. The best answer to accusing princes is the word of the justifying King.

In Ps 119:16 David said, "I will delight in thy statutes, "and here he says "they are my delight": thus resolutions formed in God's strength come to fruit, and spiritual desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

**Ver. 24. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.** His delight and his counsellors, that is, his delight *because* his counsellors; his counsellors, and therefore his delight. We know how delightful it is to any to have the advantage of good counsel, according to the perplexities and distractions in which they may be. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel, "says Solomon, Pr 27:9. Now this is the sweetness of Divine communion, and of meditation on God and his word; it employs a man with *seasonable counsel*, which is a very great refreshment to us. *T. Horton,* 1673.

**Ver. 24. Thy testimonies also are my delight,** etc. Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must make 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. *Matthew Henry.*

**Ver. 24. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.** What could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction David had both these blessings. As the fruit of his "meditation in the Lord's statutes, "in his distress they were his *"delight"*; in his seasons of perplexity they were his *"counsellors, "*directing his behaviour in the perfect way. *Charles Bridges.*

**Ver. 24. My counsellors.** In the Hebrew it is, "the men of my counsel, "which is fitly mentioned; for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their Privy Council; a child of God hath also his Privy Council, God's testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and counsellors; on the other side there was David and God's testimonies. Now, who was better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors? answered, "The dead (meaning books), which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth." Now of all such dead counsellors, God's testimonies have the preeminence. A poor, godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate, and his council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and "other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A man so furnished, is never less alone than when alone; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believed or done; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage or dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazard it expose him to. And truly, if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these: *"Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel."* *Thomas Manton.*

**Ver. 24. My counsellors.** See here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when David calleth the commandments of God his *"counsellors."* For, in the first place, he meaneth that he might scorn all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, since he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. In the second place, he meaneth that when he shall be so governed by the word of God, he would not only be truly wise, but that it would be as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea, and a great deal more. *John Calvin.*

**HINTS TO PREACHERS.**

**Ver. 24.** —

1. He reverenced them as God's testimonies.

2. He revelled in them as his delight.

3. He referred to them as his counsellors.

**Psalms 119:25\***

**EXPOSITION.**

**Ver. 25-32.** Here, it seems to me, we have the Psalmist in trouble bewailing the bondage to earthly things in which he finds his mind to be held. His soul cleaves to the dust, melts for heaviness, and cries for enlargement from its spiritual prison. In these verses we shall see the influence of the divine word upon a heart which laments its downward tendencies, and is filled with mourning because of its deadening surroundings. The word of the Lord evidently arouses prayer (Ps 119:25-29), confirms choice (Ps 119:30), and inspires renewed resolve (Ps 119:32): it is in all tribulation whether of body: or mind the surest source of help.

This portion has 'D' for its alphabetical letter: it sings of Depression, in the spirit of Devotion, Determination, and Dependence.

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust.** He means in part that he was full of sorrow; for mourners in the east cast dust on their heads, and sat in ashes, and the Psalmist felt as if these ensigns of woe were glued to him, and his very soul was made to cleave to them because of his powerlessness to rise above his grief. Does he not also mean that he felt ready to die? Did he not feel his life absorbed and fast held by the grave's mould, half choked by the death dust? It may not be straining the language if we conceive that he also felt and bemoaned his earthly mindedness and spiritual deadness. There was a tendency in his soul to cling to earth which he greatly bewailed. Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of his inmost spirit; his *soul* cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or *cleaving* to the earth. But what a mercy that the good man could feel and deplore whatever there was of evil in the cleaving! The serpent's seed can find their meat in the dust, but never shall the seed of the woman be thus degraded. Many are of the earth earthy, and never lament it; only the heaven born and heaven soaring spirit pines at the thought of being fastened to this world, and bird limed by its sorrows or its pleasures.

**Quicken thou me according to thy word.** More life is the cure for all our ailments. Only the Lord can give it. He can bestow it, bestow it at once, and do it according to his word, without departing from the usual course of his grace, as we see it mapped out in the Scriptures. It is well to know what to pray for, — David seeks quickening: one would have thought that he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives, and his body becomes erect. In reviving the life, the whole man is renewed. Shaking off the dust is a little thing by itself, but when it follows upon quickening, it is a blessing of the greatest value; just as good spirits which flow from established health are among the choicest of our mercies. The phrase, "according to thy word, "means— according to thy revealed way of quickening thy saints. The word of God shows us that he who first made us must keep us alive, and it tells us of the Spirit of God who through the ordinances pours fresh life into our souls; we beg the Lord to act towards us in this his own regular method of grace. Perhaps David remembered the word of the Lord in De 32:39, where Jehovah claims both to kill and to make alive, and he beseeches the Lord to exercise that life giving power upon his almost expiring servant. Certainly, the man of God had not so many rich promises to rest upon as we have, but even a single word was enough for him, and he right earnestly urges "according to thy word." It is a grand thing to see a believer in the dust and yet pleading the promise, a man at the grave's mouth crying, "quicken me, "and hoping that it shall be done.

Note how this first verse of the 4th octonary tallies with the first of the "Quicken me." While in a happy third (17). — "That I may live"... "Quicken me." While in a happy state he begs for bountiful dealing, and when in a forlorn condition he prays for quickening. Life is in both cases the object of pursuit: that he may have life, and have it more abundantly.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.**

The eight verses alphabetically arranged:

25. (D)epressed to the dust is my soul: quicken thou me according to thy word.

26. (D)eclared have I (to thee) my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27. (D)eclare thou to me the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28. (D)ropping (*marg.*) is my soul for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29. (D)eceitful ways remove from me; and grant me thy law graciously.

30. (D)etermined have I upon the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me.

31. (D)eliberately I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.

32. (D)ay by day I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. *Theodore Kubber.*

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust.** The Hebrew word for *"cleaveth"* signifies *"is joined, ""has adhered, ""has* *overtaken, ""has taken hold, ""has joined itself."* Our soul is a polypus: as the polypus readily adheres to the rocks, so does the soul cleave to the earth; and hardly can it be torn from the place to which it has once strongly attached itself. Though thy soul be now more perfect, and escaping from the waters of sin has become a bird of heaven, be not careless; earthly things are birdlime and glue; if you rub the wings against these thou wilt be held, and joined to the earth. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust,** etc. The word rendered *"cleaveth"* means to be glued to; to stick fast. It has the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot easily be separated from it. The word *"dust"* here may mean either the earth, and earthly things, considered as low, base, unworthy, worldly; or it may mean the grave, as if he were near to that, and in danger of dying. De Wette understands it in the latter sense. Yet the word *cleave* would hardly suggest this idea; and the force of that word would be better represented by the idea that his soul, as it were, *adhered* to the things of earth, that it seemed to be so fastened to them— *so glued* to them that it could not be detached from them; that his affections were low, earthly, grovelling, so as to give him deep distress, and lead him to cry to God for Life and strength that he might break away from them. *Albert Barnes.*

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust,** etc. The first clause seems intended to suggest two consistent but distinct ideas, that of deep degradation, as in Ps 44:25, and that of death, as in Ps 22:29. The first would be more obvious in itself, and in connection with the parallel referred to; but the other seems to be indicated as the prominent idea by the correlative petition for quickening in the last clause. *"Quicken, "*i.e., save me alive, or restore me to life, the Hebrew word being a causative of the verb to live. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth to the dust,** etc. In this verse, David hath a complaint; *"My soul cleaveth to the dust"*; and a prayer; **Quicken thou me according to thy word.** The prayer, being well considered, shall teach us the meaning of the complaint; that it was not, as some think, any hard bodily estate which grieved him, but a very sore spiritual oppression (as I may call it), bearing down his soul; that where he should have mounted up toward heaven, he was pressed down to the earth, and was so clogged with earthly cogitations, or affections, or perturbations, that he could not mount up. His particular temptation he expresses not; for the children of God many times are in that estate that they cannot tell their own griefs, and sometimes so troubled, that it is not expedient, albeit they might, to express them to others.

And hereof we learn, how that which the worldling counts wisdom, to the Christian is folly; what is joy to the one, is grief to the other. The joy of a worldling is to cleave unto the earth; when he gripes it surest, he thinks himself happiest, for it is his portion: to take heed to his worldly affairs, and have his mind upon them (in his estimation) is only wisdom. For the serpent's curse is upon him, he creeps on the earth, and licks the dust all the days of his life. This is the miserable condition of the wicked, that even their heavenly soul is become earthly. *Qui secundum corporis appetentiam vivit caro* *est, etiam anima eorum caro est;* as the Lord spake of those who perished in the Deluge, that they were but flesh, no spirit in them; that is, no spiritual or heavenly motion.

But the Christian, considering that his soul is from above, sets his affection also on those things which are above: he delights to have his conversation in heaven; and it is a grief to him when he finds his motions and affections drawn down and entangled with the earth. His life is to cleave to the Lord; but it is death to him when the neck of his soul is bowed down to the yoke of the world. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 25. My soul cleaveth to the dust.** "Look up now to the heavens." So once spake the Lord to Abraham his friend, and he speaketh thus to us also. Alas! why must it be so always that, when we come to know ourselves even but a little, we are constantly answering with the mournful sigh, *"My soul cleaveth to the dust"?* Ah! that is indeed the *deepest pain* of a soul which has already tasted that the Lord is merciful, when, although desiring to soar on high, it sadly feels how impossible it is to rise. There is much hidden pain in every heart of man even in the spiritual life; but what can deeper grieve us than the perception that we are chained as with leaden weights to things concerning which we know that they may weary but cannot satisfy us? Nay, we could never have supposed, when we first, heard the Psalm of the Good Shepherd, that it could issue from a heart that panteth after God so often and so bitterly; we could never have imagined that it could become so cold, so dry, so dark within a heart which at an earlier period had tasted so much of the power of that which is to come. Have we not formerly, with this same Psalm, been able to vaunt, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches"? But afterwards, but now perhaps... Oh sad hours, when the beams of the sun within seem quenched, and nothing but a blond red disc remains! The fervency of the first love is cooled; earthly cares and sins have, as it were, attached a leaden plummet to the wings of the soul which, God knows, would fain soar upwards. We would render thanks, and scarce can pray; we would pray, and scarce can sigh. Our treasure is in heaven, but our soul cleaves to the earth; at least earth cleaves on all sides so to it, and weighs it down, that the eye merely sees the clouds, the tongue can but breathe forth complaints. Ah, so completely can the earth fetter us, that the heavens appear to be only a problem, and our old man is like the Giant of Mythology, who, cast to the ground in the exhausting combat, receives by contact with his mother earth fresh strength. Oh, were it otherwise! Shall it not at last, at last be altered?

Dost thou really desire it, thou who out of the depths of thy soul so complainest, and canst scarcely find more tears to bewail the sorrow of thy heart? Well is it for thee if the pain thou sufferest teach thee to cry to God: "Quicken thou me, according to thy word." Yea, this is the *best comfort* for him who too well knows what it is to be bowed together with pain; this is the only hope for a heart which almost sinks in still despair. There is an *atmosphere* of life, high above this dust which streams to us from every side, and penetrates even the darkest dungeon. There is a *spring* of life by which the weary soul may be refreshed; and the entrance to this spring stands open, in spite of all the clouds of dust which obscure this valley of shadows here. There is a *power* of life which can even so completely make an end of our dead state, that we shall walk again before the face of the Lord in the land of the living, and, instead of uttering lamentation, we shall bear a song of praise upon our lips. Does not the Prince of life yet live in order also to repeat to us, "Awake and rejoice, thou that dwellest in the dust; "and the Spirit, that bloweth whither he listeth, can, will, shall he not in his own good time, with his living breath, blow from our wings the dust that cleaveth to them? But, indeed, even the gnawing pain of the soul over so much want of spirituality and dulness is ever an encouraging sign that the good work is begun in our hearts: that which is really dead shivers no more at its own cold. *"My soul cleaveth to the dust, "* sayest thou, with tears? thus wouldest thou not speak except that already a higher hand between the soul and this dust had cleft a hollow which was unknown to it before. No one has less cause for despair than he who has lost hope in himself, and really learns to seek in God that, which he deeply feels, he least of all can give himself.

Yes, this is the *way* from the deepest pain to procure the best consolation; the humble, earnest, persevering player, that he who lives would also give life to our souls, and continue to increase it, till freed from all dryness and deadness of spirit, and uprooted from the earth, we ascend to the eternal mount of light, where at last we behold all earthly clouds beneath us. This the God of life alone can work; but he is willing— nay, we have his own word as pledge, that he promises and bestows on us true life. Only, let us not forget that he who will quicken us *"according"* to his word, also performs this *through* his word. Let us then draw from out the eternally flowing fountain, and henceforth leave it unconditionally to him, how he will listen to our cry, even though he lead us through dark paths! Even through means of death God can quicken us and keep us alive. Lo, we are here; Lord, do with us as seemeth good to thee! Only let our souls live, that they may praise thee, here and eternally! *J. J. Van Oosterzee* (1817-1882), *in "The Year of Salvation."*

**Ver. 25. Cleaveth to the dust.** Is weighed down by the flesh which itself is dust. *James G. Murphy.*

**Ver. 25. The dust,** is the place of the afflicted, the wounded, and the dead. **Quicken me,** viz., to life, peace, and joy. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Ver. 25. Quicken thou me,** etc. Seeing he was alive, how prays he that God would quicken him? I answer, — The godly esteem of life, not according to that they have in their body, but in their soul. If the soul lacks the sense of mercy, and a heavenly disposition to spiritual things, they lament over it, as a dead soul: for sure it is, temporal desertions are more heavy to the godly than temporal death. **According to thy word.** This is a great faith, that where in respect of his present feeling he found himself dead, yet he hopes for life from God, according to his promise. Such was the faith of Abraham, who under hope, believed above hope. And truly, many times are God's children brought to this estate, that they have nothing to uphold them but the word of God; no sense of mercy, no spiritual disposition; but on the contrary, great darkness, horrible fears and terrors. Only they are sustained by looking to the promise of God, and kept in some hope that he will restore them to life again, because it is his praise to finish the work which he begins. *William Cowper.*

**Ver. 25. Quicken thou me.** This phrase occurs nine times, and only in this Psalm. It is of great importance, as it expresses the spiritual change by which a child of Adam becomes a child of God. Its source is God; the instrument by which it is effected is the word, Ps 119:50. *James G. Murphy.*

**Ver. 25 Quicken thou me according to thy word.** Where there is life there will be the endeavour to rise— the believer will not lie prone in his aspirations after God. From the lowest depths the language of faith is heard ascending to God most high, who performeth all things for the believer. The true child cannot but look towards the loving Father, who is the Almighty, All sufficient One. Have you not found it so? But will you mark the intelligence that shines around the believer's prayer? He prays that the Lord may quicken him *according* *to his word*. The word may be regarded in the light of the standard after which he is to be fashioned; or the Psalmist may have in view the requirements contained in the word regarding the believer's progress; or he may be thinking of the promises found therein in behalf of the poor and needy when they apply. Indeed, all these significations may be wrapped up in the one expression— *"according* *to thy word"* — the standard of perfection, the requirements of the word, — the promises concerning it. The great exemplar of the believer is Christ, — of old it was the Christ of prophecy. Then the requirements of the Lord's will were scattered through the word. The Psalmist, however, may be dwelling upon the large promises which the Lord hath given towards the perfecting of his people. You see after what the spiritual nature aspires. It is quite enough to the natural man or the formalist that he be as the generally well behaved and esteemed among professors— the spiritual man aspires beyond— he aspires after being quickened according to God's word. Judge of yourselves. *John Stephen.*

**Ver. 25. 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 deadnes

**÷PSALM 10**

Since this Psalm has no title of its own, it is supposed by some to be a fragment of Psa 9:1-20. We prefer, however, since it is complete in itself, to consider it as a separate composition. We have had instances already of Psalms which seem meant to form a pair (**Ps 1:1-2:12 3:1-4:8**) and this, with the ninth, is another specimen of the double Psalm.

The prevailing theme seems to be the oppression and persecution of the wicked, we will, therefore, for our own guidance, entitle it, THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED.

**DIVISION.** The first verse, in an exclamation of surprise, explains the intent of the Psalm, viz., to invoke the interposition of God for the deliverance of his poor and persecuted people. From **Ps 10:2-11**, the character of the oppressor is described in powerful language. In **Ps 10:12**, the cry of the first verse bursts forth again, but with a clearer utterance. In the next place (**Ps 10:13-15**), God's eye is clearly beheld as regarding all the cruel deeds of the wicked; and as a consequence of divine omniscience, the ultimate judgment of the oppressed is joyously anticipated (**Ps 10:16-18**). To the Church of God during times of persecution, and to individual saints who are smarting under the hand of the proud sinner, this Psalm furnishes suitable language both for prayer and praise.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 1.** To the tearful eye of the sufferer the Lord seemed to *stand* still, as if he calmly looked on, and did not sympathize with his afflicted one. Nay, more, the Lord appeared to be **afar off,** no longer "a very present help in trouble, "but an inaccessible mountain, into which no man would be able to climb. The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure. Let us, then, ever remember that the Lord is nigh us. The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them. Yet he that knows the frailty of man will little wonder that when we are sharply exercised, we find it hard to bear the apparent neglect of the Lord when he forbears to work our deliverance.

**Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?** It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick. When trial and desertion come together, we are in as perilous a plight as Paul, when his ship fell into a place where two seas met (**Ac 27:41**). It is but little wonder if we are like the vessel which ran aground, and the fore part stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, while the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves. When our sun is eclipsed, it is dark indeed. If we need an answer to the question, "Why hidest thou thyself?" it is to be found in the fact that there is a "needs be, "not only for trial, but for heaviness of heart under trial (**1Pe 1:6**); but how could this be the case, if the Lord should shine upon us while he is afflicting us? Should the parent comfort his child while he is correcting him, where would be the use of the chastening? A smiling face and a rod are not fit companions. God bares the back that the blow may be felt; for it is only *felt* affliction which can become *blest* affliction. If we were carried in the arms of God over every stream, where would be the trial, and where the experience, which trouble is meant to teach us?

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Whole Psalm.** There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness, and light, as this Psalm. So that, if in any respect there has not been enough said heretofore, or if there shall be anything wanting in the Psalms that shall follow, we may here find a perfect image and representation of iniquity. This Psalm, therefore, is a type, form, and description of that man, who, though he may be in the sight of himself and of men more excellent than Peter himself, is detestable in the eyes of God; and this it was that moved Augustine, and those who followed him, to understand the Psalm of ANTICHRIST. But as the Psalm is without a title, let us embrace the most general and common understanding of it (as I said), and let us look at the picture of ungodliness which it sets before us. Not that we would deny the propriety of the acceptation in which others receive it, nay, we will, in our general acceptation of the Psalm, include also its reference to ANTICHRIST. And, indeed, it will not be at all absurd if we join this Psalm with the preceding, in its order thus. That David, in the preceding, spoke of the ungodly converted, and prayed for those who were to be converted. But that here he is speaking of the ungodly that are still left so, and in power prevailing over the weak ALMUTH, concerning whom he has no hope, or is in a great uncertainty of mind, whether they ever will be converted or not. *Martin Luther.*

**Ver. 1. Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?** The answer to this is not far to seek, for if the Lord did not hide himself it would not be a time of trouble at all. As well ask why the sun does not shine at night, when for certain there could be no night if he did. It is essential to our thorough chastisement that the Father should withdraw his smile: there is a needs be not only for manifold temptations, but that we be in heaviness through them. The design of the rod is only answered by making us smart. If there be no pain, there will be no profit. If there be no hiding of God, there will be no bitterness, and consequently no purging efficacy in his chastisements. *C.H.S.*

**Ver. 1.** (*last clause*). **Times of trouble** should be times of confidence; fixedness of heart on God would prevent fears of heart. **Ps 112:7**. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed." How? "Trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Otherwise without it we shall be as light as a weather cock, moved with every blast of evil tidings, our hopes will swim or sink according to the news we hear. Providence would seem to sleep unless faith and prayer awaken it. The disciples had but little faith in their Master's accounts, yet that little faith awakened him in a storm, and he relieved them. Unbelief doth only discourage God from showing his power in taking our parts. *Stephen Charnock.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 1.** The answer to these questions furnishes a noble topic for an experimental sermon. Let me suggest that the question is not to be answered in the same manner in all cases. Past sin, trials of graces, strengthening of faith, discovery of depravity, instruction, etc., etc., are varied reasons for the hiding of our Father's face.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 2.** The second verse contains the formal indictment against the wicked:

**The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.** The accusation divides itself into two distinct charges, — pride and tyranny; the one the root and cause of the other. The second sentence is the humble petition of the oppressed:

**Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.** The prayer is reasonable, just, and natural. Even our enemies themselves being judges, it is but right that men should be done by as they wished to do to others. We only weigh you in your own scales, and measure your corn with your own bushel. Terrible shall be thy day, O persecuting Babylon! when thou shalt be made to drink of the wine cup which thou thyself hast filled to the brim with the blood of saints. There are none who will dispute the justice of God, when he shall hang every Haman on his own gallows, and cast all the enemies of his Daniels into their own den of lions.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.** THE OPPRESSOR'S PLEA. I seek but what is my own by law; it was his own free act and deed— the execution lies for goods and body; and goods or body I will have, or else my money. What if his beggardly children pine, or his proud wife perish? they perish at their own charge, not mine; and what is that to me? I must be paid, or he lie by it until I have my utmost farthing, or his bones. The law is just and good; and, being ruled by that, how can my fair proceedings be unjust? What is thirty in the hundred to a man of trade? Are we born to thrum caps or pick straws? and sell our livelihood for a few tears, and a whining face? I thank God they move me not so much as a howling dog at midnight. I will give no day if heaven itself would be security. I must have present money, or his bones...Fifteen shillings in the pound composition! I will hang first. Come, tell me not of a good conscience: a good conscience is no parcel in my trade; it hath made more bankrupts than all the loose wives in the universal city. My conscience is no fool: it tells me my own is my own, and that a well crammed bag is no deceitful friend, but will stick close to me when all my friends forsake me. If to gain a good estate out of nothing, and to regain a desperate debt which is as good as nothing, be the fruits and signs of a bad conscience, God help the good. Come, tell me not of griping and oppression. The world is hard, and he that hopes to thrive must gripe as hard. What I give I give, and what I lend I lend. If the way to heaven be to turn beggar upon earth, let them take it that like it. I know not what you call oppression, the law is my direction; but of the two, it is more profitable to oppress than to be oppressed. If debtors would be honest and discharge, our hands were bound: but when their failing offends my bags, they touch the apple of my eye, and I must right them. *Francis Quarles.*

**Ver. 2.** That famous persecutor, Domitian, like others of the Roman emperors, assumed divine honours, and heated the furnace seven times hotter against Christians because they refused to worship his image. In like manner, when the popes of Rome became decorated with the blasphemous titles of *Masters of the World,* and, *Universal* *Fathers,* they let loose their blood hounds upon the faithful. Pride is the egg of persecution. *C.H.S.*

**Ver. 2. Pride,** is a vice which cleaveth so fast unto the hearts of men, that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off. *Richard Hooker,* 1554-1600.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 2.** Religious persecution in all its phases based on pride.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 3.** The indictment being read, and the petition presented, the evidence is now heard upon the first count. The evidence is very full and conclusive upon the matter of *pride,* and no jury could hesitate to give a verdict against the prisoner at the bar. Let us, however, hear the witnesses one by one. The first testifies that he is a boaster.

**For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire.** He is a very silly boaster, for he glories in a mere desire: a very brazen faced boaster, for that desire is villainy; and a most abandoned sinner, to boast of that which is his shame. Bragging sinners are the worst and most contemptible of men, especially when their filthy desires, — too filthy to be carried into act, — become the theme of their boastings. When Mr. Hate Good and Mr. Heady are joined in partnership, they drive a brisk trade in the devil's wares. This one proof is enough to condemn the prisoner at the bar. Take him away, jailor! But stay, another witness desires to be sworn and heard. This time, the impudence of the proud rebel is even more apparent; for he

**blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.** This is insolence, which is pride unmasked. He is haughty enough to differ from the Judge of all the earth, and bless the men whom God hath cursed. So did the sinful generation in the days of Malachi, who called the proud happy, and set up those that worked wickedness (**Mal 3:15**). These base pretenders would dispute with their Maker; they would—

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod, Rejudge his justice, be the god of God."

How often have we heard the wicked man speaking in terms of honour of the covetous, the grinder of the poor, and the sharp dealer! Our old proverb hath it, —

"I wot well how the world wags; He is most loved that hath most bags."

Pride meets covetousness, and compliments it as wise, thrifty, and prudent. We say it with sorrow, there are many professors of religion who esteem a rich man, and flatter him, even though they know that he has fattened himself upon the flesh and blood of the poor. The only sinners who are received as respectable are covetous men. If a man is a fornicator, or a drunkard, we put him out of the church; but who ever read of church discipline against that idolatrous wretch, — the covetous man? Let us tremble, lest we be found to be partakers of this atrocious sin of pride, "blessing the covetous, whom Jehovah abhorreth."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 3. The wicked boasteth,** etc. He brags of his evil life, whereof he makes open profession; or he boasts that he will accomplish his wicked designs; or glories that he has already accomplished them. Or it may be understood that he commendeth others who are according to the desires of his own soul; that is, he respecteth or honoureth none but such as are like him, and them only he esteemeth. **Ps 36:4 49:18 Ro 1:32**. *John Diodati,* 1648.

**Ver. 3. The wicked... blesseth the covetous.** Like will to like, as the common proverb is. Such as altogether neglect the Lord's commandments not only commit divers gross sins, but commend those who in sinning are like themselves. For in their affections they allow them, in their speeches they flatter and extol them, and in their deeds they join with them and maintain them. *Peter Muffet,* 1594.

**Ver. 3. The covetous.** Covetousness is the desire of possessing that which we have not, and attaining unto great riches and worldly possessions. And whether this be not the character of trade and merchandise and traffic of every kind, the great source of those evils of over trading which are everywhere complained of, I refer to the judgment of the men around me, who are engaged in the commerce and business of life. Compared with the regular and quiet diligence of our fathers, and their contentment with small but sure returns, the wild and wide spread speculation for great gains, the rash and hasty adventures which are daily made, and the desperate gamester like risks which are run, do reveal full surely that a spirit of covetousness hath been poured out upon men within the last thirty or forty years. And the providence of God corresponding thereto, by wonderful and unexpected revolutions, by numerous inventions for manufacturing the productions of the earth, in order to lead men into temptation, hath impressed upon the whole face of human affairs, a stamp of earnest worldliness not known to our fathers: insomuch that our youth do enter life no longer with the ambition of providing things honest in the sight of men, keeping their credit, bringing up their family, and realising a competency, if the Lord prosper them, but with the ambition of making a fortune, retiring to their ease, and enjoying the luxuries of the present life. Against which crying sin of covetousness, dearly beloved brethren, I do most earnestly call upon you to wage a good warfare. This place is its seat, its stronghold, even this metropolitan city of Christian Britain; and ye who are called by the grace of God out of the great thoroughfare of Mammon, are so elected for the express purpose of testifying against this and all other backslidings of the church planted here; and especially against this, as being in my opinion, one of the most evident and the most common of them all. For who hath not been snared in the snare of covetousness? *Edward Irving,* 1828.

**Ver. 3. The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.** Christ knew what he spake when he said, "No man can serve two masters." **Mt 6:24**. Meaning God and the world, because each would have all. As the angel and the devil strove for the body of Moses (**Jude 1:9**), not who should have a part, but who should have the whole, so they strive still for our souls, who shall have all. Therefore, the apostle saith, "The love of this world is enmity to God" (**Jas 4:4**), signifying such emulation between these two, that God cannot abide the world should have a part, and the world cannot abide that God should have a part. Therefore, the love of the world must needs be enmity to God, and therefore the lovers of the world must needs be enemies to God, and so no covetous man is God's servant, but God's enemy. For this cause covetousness is called idolatry (**Eph 5:5**), which is the most contrary sin to God, because as treason sets up another king in the king's place, so idolatry sets up another god in God's place. *Henry Smith.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 3.** God's hatred of covetousness: show its justice.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 4.** The proud boastings and lewd blessings of the wicked have been received in evidence against him, and now his own face confirms the accusation, and his empty closet cries aloud against him.

**The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek** **after God.** Proud hearts breed proud looks and stiff knees. It is an admirable arrangement that the heart is often written on the countenance, just as the motion of the wheels of a clock find their record on its face. A brazen face and a broken heart never go together. We are not quite sure that the Athenians were wise when they ordained that men should be tried in the dark lest their countenances should weigh with the judges; for there is much more to be learned from the motions of the muscles of the face than from the words of the lips. Honesty shines in the face, but villainy peeps out at the eyes. See the effect of pride; it kept the man from seeking God. It is hard to pray with a stiff neck and an unbending knee.

**God is not in all his thoughts:** he thought much, but he had no thoughts for God. Amid heaps of chaff there was not a grain of wheat. The only place where God is not is in the thoughts of the wicked. This is a damning accusation; for where the God of heaven is not, the Lord of hell is reigning and raging; and if God be not in our thoughts, our thoughts will bring us to perdition.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not** **seek after God.** He is judged a proud man (without a jury sitting on him), who when condemned will not submit, will not stoop so low as to accept of a pardon. I must indeed correct myself, men are willing to be justified, but they would have their duties to purchase their peace and the favour of God. Thousands will die and be damned rather than they will have a pardon upon the sole account of Christ's merits and obedience. Oh, the cursed pride of the heart! When will men cease to be wiser than God? To limit God? When will men be contented with God's way of saving them by the blood of the everlasting covenant? How dare men thus to prescribe to the infinitely wise God? Is it not enough for thee that thy destruction is of thyself? But must thy salvation be of thyself too? Is it not enough that thou hast wounded thyself, but wilt thou die for ever, rather than be beholden to a plaister of free grace? Wilt be damned unless thou mayest be thine own Saviour? God is willing ("God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"), art thou so proud as that thou wilt not be beholden to God? Thou wilt deserve, or have nothing. What shall I say? Poor thou art, and yet proud; thou hast nothing but wretchedness and misery, and yet thou art talking of a purchase. This is a provocation. "God resisteth the proud, "especially the spiritually proud. He that is proud of his clothes and parentage, is not so contemptible in God's eyes as he that is proud of his abilities, and so scorns to submit to God's methods for his salvation by Christ, and by his righteousness alone. *Lewis Stuckley.*

**Ver. 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not** **seek after God.** The pride of the wicked is the principal reason why they will not seek after the knowledge of God. This knowledge it prevents them from seeking in various ways. In the first place, it renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation to the wicked, and a knowledge of him as undesirable. Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of one's self. It is, therefore, impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. In proportion as it prevails in the heart, it makes us wish to see nothing above us, to acknowledge no law but our own wills, to follow no rule but our own inclinations. Thus it led Satan to rebel against his Creator, and our first parents to desire to be as gods. Since such are the effects of pride, it is evident that nothing can be more painful to a proud heart than the thoughts of such a being as God; one who is infinitely powerful, just, and holy; who can neither be resisted, deceived, nor deluded; who disposes, according to his own sovereign pleasure, of all creatures and events; and who, in an especial manner, hates pride, and is determined to abase and punish it. Such a being pride can contemplate only with feelings of dread, aversion, and abhorrence. It must look upon him as its natural enemy, the great enemy, whom it has to fear. But the knowledge of God directly tends to bring this infinite, irresistible, irreconcilable enemy full to the view of the proud man. It teaches him that he has a superior, a master, from whose authority he cannot escape, whose power he cannot resist, and whose will he must obey, or be crushed before him, and be rendered miserable for ever. It shows him what he hates to see, that, in despite of his opposition, God's counsel shall stand, that he will do all his pleasure, and that in all things wherein men deal proudly, God is above them. These truths torture the proud unhumbled hearts of the wicked, and hence they hate that knowledge of God which teaches these truths, and will not seek it. On the contrary, they wish to remain ignorant of such a being, and to banish all thoughts of him from their minds. With this view, they neglect, pervert, or explain away those passages of revelation which describe God's true character, and endeavour to believe that he is altogether such a one as themselves. How foolish, how absurd, how ruinous, how blindly destructive of its own object, does pride appear! By attempting to soar, it only plunges itself in the mire, and while endeavouring to erect for itself a throne, it undermines the ground on which it stands and digs its own grave. It plunged Satan from heaven into hell; it banished our first parents from paradise; and it will, in a similar manner, ruin all who indulge in it. It keeps us in ignorance of God, shuts us out from his favour, prevents us from resembling him, deprives us in this world of all the honour and happiness which communion with him would confer; and in the next, unless previously hated, repented of, and renounced, will bar for ever against us the door of heaven, and close upon us the gates of hell. O then, my friends, beware, above all things, beware of pride! Beware, lest you indulge it imperceptibly, for it is perhaps, of all sins, the most secret, subtle, and insinuating. *Edward Payson, D.D.,* 1783-1827.

**Ver. 4.** David speaks in **Ps 10:1-18** of great and potent oppressors and politicians, who see none on earth greater than themselves, none higher than they, and think therefore that they may *impune* prey upon the smaller, as beasts use to do; and in the fourth verse this is made the root and ground of all, that God is not in all his thoughts. **The wicked, through the pride of his** **countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his** **thoughts.** The words are diversely read, and all make for this sense. Some read it, "No God in all his crafty presumptuous purposes; " others, "All his thoughts are, there is no God." The meaning whereof is not only that among the swarm and crowd of thoughts that fill his mind, the thought of God is seldom to be found, and comes not in among the rest, which yet is enough for the purpose in hand; but further, that in all his projects and plots, and consultations of his heart (the first reading of the words intends), whereby he contrives and lays the plot, form, and draught of all his actions, he never takes God or his will into consideration or consultation, to square and frame all accordingly, but proceeds and goes on in all, and carries on all as if there were no God to be consulted with. He takes not him along with him, no more than if he were no God; the thoughts of him and his will sway him not. As you use to say, when a combination of men leave out someone they should advise with, that such a one is not of their counsel, is not in the plot; so nor is God in their purposes and advisings, they do all without him. But this is not all the meaning, but farther, all their thought is, that there is no God. This is there made the bottom, the foundation, the groundwork and reason of all their wicked plots and injurious projects, and deceitful carriages and proceedings, that seeing there is no God or power above them to take notice of it, to regard or requite them, therefore they may be bold to go on. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Ver. 4. Of his countenance.** Which pride he carrieth engraven in his very countenance and forehead, and makes it known in all his carriages and gestures. **Will not seek,** namely, he contemneth all divine and human laws, he feareth not, respecteth not God's judgments; he careth for nothing, so he may fulfil his desires; enquires after, nor examines nothing; all things are indifferent to him. *John Diodati.*

**Ver. 4. All his thoughts are,** there is **no God;** thus some read the passage. Seneca says, there are no atheists, though there would be some; if any say there is no God, they lie; though they say it in the daytime, yet in the night when they are alone they deny it; howsoever some desperately harden themselves, yet if God doth but show himself terrible to them, they confess him. Many of the heathens and others have denied that there is a God, yet when they were in distress, they did fall down and confess him, as Diagoras, that grand atheist, when he was troubled with the strangullion, acknowledged a deity which he had denied. These kind of atheists I leave to the tender mercies of God, of which I doubt it whether there be any for them. *Richard Stock.*

**Ver. 4. God is not in all his thoughts.** It is the black work of an ungodly man or an atheist, that God is not in all his thoughts. What comfort can be had in the being of God without thinking of him with reverence and delight? A God forgotten is as good as no God to us. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 4.** Trifles possess us, but **God is not in all our** **thoughts**, seldom the sole object of them. We have durable thoughts of transitory things, and flitting thoughts of a durable and eternal good. The covenant of grace engages the whole heart to God, and bars anything else from engrossing it; but what strangers are God and the souls of most men! Though we have the knowledge of him by creation, yet he is for the most part an unknown God in the relations wherein he stands to us, because a God undelighted in. Hence it is, as one observes, that because we observe not the ways of God's wisdom, conceive not of him in his vast perfections, nor are stricken with an admiration of his goodness, that we have fewer good sacred poems than of any other kind. The wits of men hang the wing when they come to exercise their reasons and fancies about God. Parts and strength are given us, as well as corn and wine to the Israelites, for the service of God, but those are consecrated to some cursed Baal, **Ho 2:8**, like Venus in the poet, we forsake heaven to follow after some Adonis. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 4-5.** The world hath a spiritual fascination and witchcraft, by which, where it hath once prevailed, men are enchanted to an utter forgetfulness of themselves and God, and being drunk with pleasures, they are easily engaged to a madness and height of folly. Some, like foolish children, are made to keep a great stir in the world for very trifles, for a vain show; they think themselves great, honourable, excellent, and for this make a great bustle, when the world hath not added one cubic to their stature of real worth. Others are by this Circe transformed into savage creatures, and act the part of lions and tigers. Others, like swine, wallow in the lusts of uncleanness. Others are unmanned, putting off all natural affections, care not who they ride over, so they may rule over or be made great. Others are taken with ridiculous frenzies, so that a man that stands in the cool shade of a sedate composure would judge them out of their wits. It would make a man admire to read of the frisks of Caius Caligula, Xerxes, Alexander, and many others, who because they were above many men, thought themselves above human nature. They forgot they were born and must die, and did such things as would have made them, but that their greatness overawed it, a laughing stock and common scorn to children. Neither must we think that these were but some few or rare instances of worldly intoxication, when the Scripture notes it as a general distemper of all that bow down to worship this idol. They live "without God in the world, "saith the apostle, that is, they so carry it as if there were no God to take notice of them to check them for their madness. **God is not in all his thoughts**. **Ps 10:4**. **The** **judgments of God are far above out of his sight;** he puffs at his enemies (**Ps 10:5**), and saith in his heart, he **shall never be** **moved**, **Ps 10:6**. The whole Psalm describes the worldling as a man that hath lost all his understanding, and is acting the part of a frantic bedlam. What then can be a more fit engine for the devil to work with than the pleasures of the world? *Richard Gilpin.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 4.** Pride the barrier in the way of conversion.

**Ver. 4.** (*last clause*). Thoughts in which God is not, weighed and condemned.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 5. His ways are always grievous.** To himself they are hard. Men go a rough road when they go to hell. God has hedged up the way of sin: O what folly to leap these hedges and fall among the thorns! To others, also, his ways cause much sorrow and vexation; but what cares he? He sits like the idol god upon his monstrous car, utterly regardless of the crowds who are crushed as he rolls along.

**Thy judgments are far above out of his sight:** he looks high, but not high enough. As God is forgotten, so are his judgments. He is not able to comprehend the things of God; a swine may sooner look through a telescope at the stars than this man study the Word of God to understand the righteousness of the Lord.

**As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.** He defies and domineers; and when men resist his injurious behaviour, he sneers at them, and threatens to annihilate them with a puff. In most languages there is a word of contempt borrowed from the action of puffing with the lips, and in English we should express the idea by saying, "He cries, *Pooh! Pooh!* at his enemies." Ah! there is one enemy who will not thus be puffed at. Death will puff at the candle of his life and blow it out, and the wicked boaster will find it grim work to brag in the tomb.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 4-5.** **See Psalms on "Ps 10:4"** for further information.

**Ver. 5. Grievous,** or troublesome; that is, all his endeavours and actions aim at nothing but at hurting others. **Are far above,** for he is altogether carnal, he hath not any disposition nor correspondence with the justice of thy law, which is altogether spiritual; and therefore cannot lively represent unto himself thy judgments, and the issue of the wicked according to the said law. **Ro 7:14 1Co 2:14.** **He puffeth;** he doth most arrogantly despise them, and is confident he can overthrow them with a puff. *John Diodati.*

**Ver. 5. Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.** Because God does not immediately visit every sin with punishment, ungodly men do not see that in due time he judges all the earth. Human tribunals must of necessity, by promptness and publicity, commend themselves to the common judgment, but the Lord's modes of dealing with sin are more sublime and apparently more tardy, hence the bat's eyes of godless men cannot see them, and the grovelling wits of men cannot comprehend them. If God sat in the gate of every village and held his court there, even fools might discern his righteousness, but they are not capable of perceiving that for a matter to be settled in the highest court, even in heaven itself, is a far more solemn matter. Let believers take heed lest they fall in a degree into the same error, and begin to criticise the actions of The Great Supreme, when they are too elevated for human reason to comprehend them. *C.H.S.*

**Ver. 5. The judgments of God are far above out of his sight.** Out of his sight, as an eagle at her highest towering so lessens herself to view, that he sees not the talons, nor fears the grip. Thus man presumes till he hath sinned, and then despairs as fast afterwards. At first, "Tush, doth God see it?" At last, "Alas! will God forgive it?" But if a man will not know his sins, his sins will know him; the eyes which presumption shuts, commonly despair opens. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 5. As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.** David describeth a *proud* man, *puffing at his enemies:* he is puffed up and swelled with high conceits of himself, as if he had some great matter in him, and he puffs at others as if he could do some great matter against them, forgetting that himself is but, as to his being in this world, a puff of wind which passeth away. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 5. As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them;** literally, **He whistles at them.** He is given over to the dominion of gloomy indifference, and he cares as little for others as for himself. Whosoever may be imagined by him to be an enemy he cares not. Contempt and ridicule are his only weapons; and he has forgotten how to use others of a more sacred character. His mental habits are marked by scorn; and he treats with contempt the judgments, opinions, and practices of the wisest of men. *John Morison.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 5. Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.** Moral inability of men to appreciate the character and acts of God.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 6.** The testimony of the sixth verse concludes the evidence against the prisoner upon the first charge of pride, and certainly it is conclusive in the highest degree. The present witness has been prying into the secret chambers of the heart, and has come to tell us what he has heard.

**He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never** **be in adversity.** O impertinence runs to seed! The man thinks himself immutable, and omnipotent too, for *he, he* is never to be in adversity. He counts himself a privileged man. He sits alone, and shall see no sorrow. His nest is in the stars, and he dreams not of a hand that shall pluck him thence. But let us remember that this man's house is built upon the sand, upon a foundation no more substantial than the rolling waves of the sea. He that is too secure is never safe. Boastings are not buttresses, and self confidence is a sorry bulwark. This is the ruin of fools, that when they succeed they become too big, and swell with self conceit, as if their summer would last for ever, and their flowers bloom on eternally. Be humble, O man! for thou art mortal, and thy lot is mutable. The second crime is now to be proved. The fact that the man is proud and arrogant may go a long way to prove that he is vindicative and cruel. Haman's pride was the father of a cruel design to murder all the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar builds an idol; in pride he commands all men to bow before it; and then cruelly stands ready to heat the furnace seven times hotter for those who will not yield to his imperious will. Every proud thought is twin brother to a cruel thought. He who exalts himself will despise others, and one step further will make him a tyrant.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I** **shall never be in adversity.** Carnal security opens the door for all impiety to enter into the soul. Pompey, when he had in vain assaulted a city, and could not take it by force, devised this stratagem in way of agreement; he told them he would leave the siege and make peace with them, upon condition that they would let in a few weak, sick, and wounded soldiers among them to be cured. They let in the soldiers, and when the city was secure, the soldiers let in Pompey's army. A carnal settled security will let in a whole army of lusts into the soul. *Thomas Brooks.*

**Ver. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I** **shall never be in adversity.** To consider religion always on the comfortable side; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness before they have been employed to fight the battle; to be content with a false peace, and to use no effort to obtain the graces to which true consolation is annexed: this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as a crystal, smooth as glass— the air serene; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy, but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light inflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of many men's assurance of salvation. *James Saurin,* 1677-1730.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 6.** The vain confidence of sinners.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 7.** Let us now hear the witnesses in court. Let the wretch speak for himself, for out of his own mouth he will be condemned.

**His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud.** There is not only a little evil there, but his mouth is full of it. A three headed serpent hath stowed away its coils and venom within the den of its black mouth. There is

**cursing** which he spits against both God and men,

**deceit** with which he entraps the unwary, and

**fraud** by which, even in his common dealings, he robs his neighbours. Beware of such a man: have no sort of dealing with him: none but the silliest of geese would go to the fox's sermon, and none but the most foolish will put themselves into the society of knaves. But we must proceed. Let us look under this man's tongue as well as in his mouth;

**under his tongue is mischief and vanity.** Deep in his throat are the unborn words which shall come forth as mischief and iniquity.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 7. Under his tongue is mischief and vanity.** The striking allusion of this expression is to certain venomous reptiles, which are said to carry bags of poison under their teeth, and, with great subtlety to inflict the most deadly injuries upon those who come within their reach. How affectingly does this represent the sad havoc which minds tainted with infidelity inflict on the community! By their perversions of truth, and by their immoral sentiments and practices, they are as injurious to the mind as the deadliest poison can be to the body. *John Morison.*

**Ver. 7.** Cursing men are cursed men. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 7,9.** In Anne Askew's account of her examination by Bishop Bonner, we have an instance of the cruel craft of persecutors: "On the morrow after, my lord of London sent for me at one of the clock, his hour being appointed at three. And as I came before him, he said he was very sorry of my trouble, and desired to know my opinion in such matters as were laid against me. He required me also boldly in any wise to utter the secrets of my heart; bidding me not to fear in any point, for whatsoever I did say within his house, no man should hurt me for it. I answered, `For so much as your lordship hath appointed three of the clock, and my friends shall not come till that hour, I desire you to pardon me of giving answer till they come.'"Upon this Bale remarks: "`In this preventing of the hour may the diligent perceive the greediness of this Babylon bishop, or bloodthirsty wolf, concerning his prey. `Swift are their feet, 'saith David, `in the effusion of innocent blood, which have fraud in their tongues, venom in their lips, and most cruel vengeance in their mouths.' David much marvels in the spirit that, taking upon them the spiritual governance of the people, they can fall into such frenzy or forgetfulness of themselves, as to believe it lawful thus to oppress the faithful, and to devour them with as little compassion as he that greedily devoureth a piece of bread. If such have read anything of God, they have little minded their true duty therein. `More swift, 'saith Jeremy, `are our cruel persecutors than the eagles of the air. They follow upon us over the mountains, and lay privy wait for us in the wilderness.' He that will know the crafty hawking of bishops to bring in their prey, let them learn it here. Judas, I think, had never the tenth part of their cunning workmanship.'" *John Bale, D.D., Bishop of Ossory,* 1495-1563, *in "Examination of* *Anne Askew." Parker Society's Publications.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 8.** Despite the bragging of this base wretch, it seems that he is as cowardly as he is cruel.

**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.** He acts the part of the highwayman, who springs upon the unsuspecting traveller in some desolate part of the road. There are always bad men lying in wait for the saints. This is a land of robbers and thieves; let us travel well armed, for every bush conceals an enemy. Everywhere there are traps laid for us, and foes thirsting for our blood. There are enemies at our table as well as across the sea. We are never safe, save when the Lord is with us.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 8. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages,** etc. The Arab robber lurks like a wolf among these sand heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveller, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about, or lag behind, and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here— Kaifa before, Acre in the rear, and travellers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so. There are a hundred allusions to just such things in the history, the Psalms, and the prophets of Israel. A whole class of imagery is based upon them. Thus, in **Ps 10:8-10**, "He sits in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: he lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net; he croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones." And a thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travellers. You observe that all these people we meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Kaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way. Strange, most strange land! but it tallies wonderfully with its ancient story. *W. M. Thompson, D.D., in "The Land and the Book, "*1859.

**Ver. 8.** My companions asked me if I knew the danger I had escaped. "No, "I replied; "What danger?" They then told me that, just after they started, they saw a wild Arab skulking after me, crouching to the ground, with a musket in his hand; and that, as soon as he had reached within what appeared to them musket shot of me, he raised his gun; but, looking wildly around him, as a man will do who is about to perpetrate some desperate act, he caught sight of them and disappeared. Jeremiah knew something of the ways of these Arabs when he wrote (**Jer 3:2**) "In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; " and the simile is used in **Ps 10:9-10**, for the Arabs wait and watch for their prey with the greatest eagerness and perseverance. *John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings, "*1860.

**Ver. 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.** All this strength of metaphor and imagery is intended to mark the assiduity, the cunning, the low artifice, to which the enemies of truth and righteousness will often resort in order to accomplish their corrupt and vicious designs. The extirpation of true religion is their great object; and there is nothing to which they will not stoop in order to effect that object. The great powers which have oppressed the church of Christ, in different ages, have answered to this description. Both heathen and papistical authorities have thus condescended in infamy. They have sat, as it were, in ambush for the poor of Christ's flock; they have adopted every stratagem that infernal skill could invent; they have associated themselves with princes in their palaces, and with beggars on their dunghill; they have resorted to the village, and they have mingled in the gay and populous city; and all for the vain purpose of attempting to blot out a "name which shall endure for ever, and which shall be continued as long as the sun." *John Morison.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 8.** Dangers of godly men, or the snares in the way of believers.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 9.** The picture becomes blacker, for here is the cunning of the lion, and of the huntsman, as well as the stealthiness of the robber. Surely there are some men who come up to the very letter of this description. With watching, perversion, slander, whispering, and false swearing, they ruin the character of the righteous, and murder the innocent; or, with legal quibbles, mortgages, bonds, writs, and the like, they catch the poor, and draw them into a net. Chrysostom was peculiarly severe upon this last phase of cruelty, but assuredly not more so than was richly merited. Take care, brethren, for there are other traps besides these. Hungry lions are crouching in every den, and fowlers spread their nets in every field. Quarles well pictures our danger in those memorable lines, —

"The close pursuers busy hands do plant Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy wants;

Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace; Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base; Snares tuck thy bed; and snares surround thy board; Snares watch thy thoughts; and snares attack thy word; "

"Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion; Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion; Snares lurk in thy resolves; snares in thy doubt; Snares lie within thy heart; and snares without; Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath; Snares in thy sickness; snares are in thy death."

"O Lord! keep thy servants, and defend us from all our enemies!"

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 7,9.** **See Psalms on "Ps 10:7"** for further information.

**Ver. 9. He doth catch the poor.** The poor man is the beast they hunt, who must rise early, rest late, eat the bread of sorrow, sit with many a hungry meal, perhaps his children crying for food, while all the fruit of his pains is served into Nimrod's table. Complain of this while you will, yet, as the orator said of Verres, *pecuniosus nescit* *damnari.* Indeed, a money man may not be damnified, but he may be damned. For this is a crying sin, and the wakened ears of the Lord will hear it, neither shall his provoked hands forbear it. *Si* *tacuerint pauperes loquentur lapides.* If the poor should hold their peace, the very stones would speak. The fines, rackings, enclosures, oppressions, vexations, will cry to God for vengeance. "The stone will cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." **Hab 2:11**. You see the beasts they hunt. Not foxes, not wolves, nor boars, bulls, nor tigers. It is a certain observation, no beast hunts its own kind to devour it. Now, if these should prosecute wolves, foxes, &c., they should then hunt their own kind; for they are these themselves, or rather worse than these, because here *homo* *homini lupus.* But though they are men they hunt, and by nature of the same kind, they are not so by quality, for they are lambs they persecute. In them there is blood, and flesh, and fleece to be had; and therefore on these do they gorge themselves. In them there is weak armour of defence against their cruelties; therefore over these they may domineer. I will speak it boldly: there is not a mighty Nimrod in this land that dares hunt his equal; but over his inferior lamb he insults like a young Nero. Let him be graced by high ones, and he must not be saluted under twelve score off. In the country he proves a termagant; his very scowl is a prodigy, and breeds an earthquake. He would be a Caesar, and tax all. It is well if he prove not a cannibal! Only Macro salutes Sejanus so long as he is in Tiberius's favour; cast him from that pinnacle, and the dog is ready to devour him. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 9. He draweth him into his net.** "They hunt with a net." **Mic 7:2**. They have their politic gins to catch men; gaudy wares and dark shops (and would you have them love the light that live by darkness, as many shopkeepers?) draw and tole customers in, where the crafty leeches can soon feel their pulses: if they must buy they shall pay for their necessity. And though they plead, We compel none to buy our ware, *caveat emptor;* yet with fine voluble phrases, damnable protestations, they will cast a mist of error before an eye of simple truth, and with cunning devices hunt them in. So some among us have feathered their nests, not by open violence, but politic circumvention. They have sought the golden fleece, not by Jason's merit, but by Medea's subtlety, by Medea's sorcery. If I should intend to discover these hunter's plots, and to deal punctually with them, I should afford you more matter than you would afford me time. But I limit myself and answer all their plans with Augustine. Their tricks may hold *in* *jure fori,* but not *in jure poli* — in the common pleas of earth, not before the king's bench in heaven. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 9.** Oppression turns princes into roaring lions, and judges into ravening wolves. It is an unnatural sin, against the light of nature. No creatures do oppress them of their own kind. Look upon the birds of prey, as upon eagles, vultures, hawks, and you shall never find them preying upon their own kind. Look upon the beasts of the forest, as upon the lion, the tiger, the wolf, the bear, and you shall ever find them favourable to their own kind; and yet men unnaturally prey upon one another, like the fish in the sea, the great swallowing up the small. *Thomas Brooks.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 9.** The ferocity, craftiness, strength, and activity of Satan.

**Ver. 9.** (*last clause*). The Satanic fisherman, his art, diligence, success, etc.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 10. He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall** **by his strong ones.** Seeming humility is often armour bearer to malice. The lion crouches that he may leap with the greater force, and bring down his strong limbs upon his prey. When a wolf was old, and had tasted human blood, the old Saxon cried, "Ware, wolf!" and we may cry, "Ware fox!" They who crouch to our feet are longing to make us fall. Be very careful of fawners; for friendship and flattery are deadly enemies.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 10. He croucheth, and humbleth himself,** etc. There is nothing too mean or servile for them, in the attempt to achieve their sinister ends. You shall see his holiness the Pope washing the pilgrims' feet, if such a stratagem be necessary to act in the minds of the deluded multitude; or you shall see him sitting on a throne of purple, if he wishes to awe and control the kings of the earth. *John Morison.*

**Ver. 10.** If you take a wolf in a lambskin, hang him up; for he is the worst of the generation. *Thomas Adams.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 10.** Designing humility unmasked.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 11.** As upon the former count, so upon this one; a witness is forthcoming, who has been listening at the keyhole of the heart. Speak up, friend, and let us hear your story. **He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.** This cruel man comforts himself with the idea that God is blind, or, at least, forgetful: a fond and foolish fancy, indeed. Men doubt Omniscience when they persecute the saints. If we had a sense of God's presence with us, it would be impossible for us to ill treat his children. In fact, there can scarcely be a greater preservation from sin than the constant thought of "Thou, God, seest me." Thus has the trial proceeded. The case has been fully stated; and now it is but little wonder that the oppressed petitioner lifts up the cry for judgment, which we find in the following verse: —

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.** Is it not a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding. Time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practice them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves. **1Sa 15:2**. Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers, to be requited upon their posterity. "Behold it is written." **Isa 65:6**. What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us; because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up." **Ho 13:12.** As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.** Many say in their hearts, "God seeth them not, "while with their tongues they confess he is an all seeing God. The heart hath a tongue in it as well as the head, and these two tongues seldom speak the same language. While the head tongue saith, "We cannot hide ourselves from the sight of God, "the heart tongue of wicked men will say, "God will hide himself from us, he will not see." But if their heart speak not thus, then as the prophet saith **(Isa 29:15),** "They dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord; "surely they have a hope to hide their counsels, else they would not dig deep to hide them. Their digging is not proper, but tropical; as men dig deep to hide what they would not have in the earth, so they by their wits, plots, and devices, do their best to hide their counsels from God, and they say, "Who seeth, who knoweth? We, surely, are not seen either by God or man." *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 11**. The Scripture everywhere places sin upon this root. **God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it**. He hath turned his back upon the world. This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked, which he mentions, **Ps 10:9-10.** There is no sin but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience, and all other bitter gourds, grow up in a night! It is from this topic all iniquity will draw arguments to encourage itself; for nothing so much discountenances those rising corruptions, and puts them out of heart, as an actuated belief that God takes care of human affairs. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 11. He hath said in his heart,** etc. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." **Ec 8:11**. God forbears punishing, therefore men forbear repenting. He doth not smite upon their back by correction, therefore they do not smite upon their thigh by humiliation. **Jer 31:19**. The sinner thinks thus,: "God hath spared me all this while, he hath eked out patience into longsuffering; surely he will not punish." *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.* God sometimes in infinite patience adjourns his judgments and puts off the sessions a while longer, he is not willing to punish. **2Pe 3:9.** The bee naturally gives honey, but stings only when it is angered. The Lord would have men make their peace with him. **Isa 27:5.** God is not like a hasty creditor that requires the debt, and will give no time for the payment; he is not only gracious, but "waits to be gracious" **(Isa 30:18)**; but God by his patience would bribe sinners to repentance; but alas! how is this patience abused. God's longsuffering hardens: because God stops the vials of his wrath, sinners stop the conduit of tears. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it**. Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke him. As he adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. What is this, but as if a man should break all his bones because there is a surgeon who is able to set them again?... Because justice seems to *wink*, men suppose her *blind;* because she delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them; because she does not always reprove them for their sins, they suppose she always approves of their sins, But let such know, that the silent arrow can destroy as well as the roaring cannon. Though the patience of God be *lasting*, yet it is not *everlasting. William Secker.*

**Ver. 11-13.** The atheist denies God's ordering of sublunary matters. "Tush, doth the Lord see, or is there knowledge in the Most High?" making him a maimed Deity, without an eye of providence, or an arm of power, and at most restraining him only to matters above the clouds. But he that dares to confine the King of heaven, will soon after endeavour to depose him, and fall at last flatly to deny him. *Thomas Fuller.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 11**. Divine omniscience and the astounding presumption of sinners.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 12**. With what bold language will faith address its God! and yet what unbelief is mingled with our strongest confidence. Fearlessly the Lord is stirred up to arise and lift up his hand, yet timidly he is begged not to forget the humble; as if Jehovah could ever be forgetful of his saints. This verse is the incessant cry of the Church, and she will never refrain therefrom until her Lord shall come in his glory to avenge her of all her adversaries.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 11-13. See Psalms on "Ps 10:11"** for further information.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 12. Arise, O Lord**. A prayer needful, allowable, seasonable, etc.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 13.** In these verses the description of the wicked is condensed, and the evil of his character traced to its source, viz., atheistical ideas with regard to the government of the world. We may at once perceive that this is intended to be another urgent plea with the Lord to show his power, and reveal his justice. When the wicked call God's righteousness in question, we may well beg him to teach them terrible things in righteousness. In **Ps 10:13,** the hope of the infidel and his heart wishes are laid bare. He despises the Lord, because he will not believe that sin will meet with punishment:

**he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.** If there were no hell for other men, there ought to be one for those who question the justice of it.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 11-13. See Psalms on "Ps 10:11"** for further information.

**Ver. 13 He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.** As when the desperate pirate, ransacking and rifling a bottom was told by the master, that though no law could touch him for the present, he should answer it at the day of judgment, replied, "If I may stay so long ere I come to it, I will take thee and thy vessel too." A conceit wherewith too many land thieves and oppressors flatter themselves in their hearts, though they dare not utter it with their lips. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 13-14**. What, do you think that God doth not remember our sins which we do not regard? for while we sin the score runs on, and the Judge setteth down all in the table of remembrance, and his scroll reacheth up to heaven. Item, for lending to usury; item, for racking of rents; item, for starching thy ruffs; item, for curling thy hair; item, for painting thy face; item, for selling of benefices; item, for starving of souls; item, for playing at cards; item, for sleeping in the church; item, for profaning the Sabbath day, with a number more hath God to call to account, for every one must answer for himself. The fornicator, for taking of filthy pleasure; the careless prelate, for murdering so many thousand souls; the landlord, for getting money from his poor tenants by racking of his rents; see the rest, all they shall come like very sheep when the trumpet shall sound and the heaven and the earth shall come to judgment against them; when the heavens shall vanish like a scroll, and the earth shall consume like fire, and all the creatures standing against them; the rocks shall cleave asunder, and the mountains shake, and the foundation of the earth shall tremble, and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, fall upon us, and hide us from the presence of his anger and wrath whom we have not cared to offend. But they shall not be covered and hid; but then shall they go the back way, to the snakes and serpents, to be tormented of devils for ever. *Henry Smith.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 13** (first clause). An astounding fact, and a reasonable enquiry.

**Ver. 13.** Future retribution: doubts concerning it.

1. By whom indulged: **the wicked.**   
2. Where fostered: **in his heart.**3. For what purpose: *quieting of conscience,* etc.   
4. With what practical tendency: **contemn God.**

He who disbelieves hell, distrusts heaven.

**Ver. 13-14.** Divine government in the world.

1. Who doubt it? and why?   
2. Who believe it? and what does this faith cause them to do?

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 14.** This vile suggestion receives its answer in **Ps 10:14.**

**Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.** God is all eye to see, and all hand to punish his enemies. From Divine oversight there is no hiding, and from Divine justice there is no fleeing. Wanton mischief shall meet with woeful misery, and those who harbour spite shall inherit sorrow. Verily there is a God which judgeth in the earth. Nor is this the only instance of the presence of God in the world; for while he chastises the oppressor, he befriends the oppressed.

**The poor committeth himself unto thee.** They give themselves up entirely into the Lord's hands. Resigning their judgment to his enlightenment, and their wills to his supremacy, they rest assured that he will order all things for the best. Nor does he deceive their hope. He preserves them in times of need, and causes them to rejoice in his goodness. **Thou art the helper of the fatherless.** God is the parent of all orphans. When the earthly father sleeps beneath the sod, a heavenly Father smiles from above. By some means or other, orphan children are fed, and well they may when they have such a Father.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 13-14. See Psalms on "Ps 10:14"** for further information.

**Ver. 14. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hands,** etc. This should be a terror to the wicked, to think that whatsoever they do, they do it in the *sight* of him that shall *judge* them, and call them to a strict account for every thought conceived against his majesty; and therefore, it should make them afraid to sin; because that when they burn with lust, and toil with hatred, when they scorn the just and wrong the innocent, they do all this, not only *in conspectu Dei,* within the compass of God's sight, but also in *sinu divinitatis,* in the bosom of that Deity, who, though he suffered them for a time to run on, like "a wild ass used to in the wilderness, "yet he will find them out at the last, and then cut them off and destroy them. And as this is terror unto the wicked, so it may be a comfort unto the godly to think that he who should hear their prayers and send them help, is so near unto them; and it should move them to rely still upon him, because we are sure of his presence wherever we are. *G. Williams,* 1636.

**Ver. 14. The poor committeth himself unto thee.** The awkwardness of our hearts to suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise as a man upon ice; at first going upon it he is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack. Now, daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God's power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes (for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge), so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense, to gain them credit with us, yet so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look, therefore, carefully to this; every morning leave thyself and ways in God's hand, as the phrase is. **Ps 10:14.** And at night look again how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God's keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befalls thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith insured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his. **Ps 42:1-11.** And thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 14. Thou art the helper of the fatherless.** God doth exercise a more special province over men, as clothed with miserable circumstances; and therefore among his other titles this is one, to be a *"helper of the fatherless."* It is the argument the church used to express her return to God; **Ho 14:3,** "For in thee the fatherless find mercy." Now what greater comfort is there than this, that there is one presides in the world who is so wise he cannot be mistaken, so faithful he cannot deceive, so pitiful he cannot neglect his people, and so powerful that he can make stones even to be turned into bread if he please!... God doth not govern the world only by his will as an absolute monarch, but by his wisdom and goodness as a tender father. It is not his greatest pleasure to show his sovereign power, or his inconceivable wisdom, but his immense goodness, to which he makes the other attributes subservient. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 14. Thou hast seen it,** etc. If God did not see our ways, we might sin and go unpunished; but forasmuch as he seeth them with purer eyes than to behold iniquity and approve it, he is engaged both in justice and honour to punish all that iniquity of our ways which he seeth or beholdeth. David makes this the very design of God's superintendency over the ways of men: **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.** Thus the psalmist represents the Lord as having taken a view or survey of the ways of men. *"Thou hast seen."* What hath God seen? Even all that wickedness and oppression of the poor spoken of in the former part of the Psalm, as also the blasphemy of the wicked against himself **(Ps 10:13),** *"Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it."* What saith the psalmist concerning God, to this vain, confident man? *"Thou, "* saith he, *"beholdest mischief and spite; "* but to what purpose? the next words tell us that- *"to requite it with thy hand."* As thou hast seen what mischief they have done spitefully, so in due time thou wilt requite it righteously. The Lord is not a bare spectator, he is both a rewarder and an avenger. Therefore, from the ground of this truth, that the Lord seeth all our ways, and counteth all our steps, we, as the prophet exhorts **(Isa 3:10-11),** may "say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." We may also say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Only idols which have eyes and see not, have hands and strike not. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 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. Let the poor know that their God doth take care of them, to visit their sins with rods who spoil them, seeing they have forgotten that we are members one of another, and have invaded the goods of their brethren; God will arm them against themselves, and beat them with their own staves; either their own compassing and over reaching wits shall consume their store, or their unthrifty posterity shall put wings upon their riches to make them fly; or God shall not give them the blessing to take use of their wealth, but they shall leave to such as shall be merciful to the poor. Therefore let them follow the wise man's counsel **(Ec 10:20),** "Curse not the rich, no, not in thy bedchamber; "let no railing and unchristian bitterness wrong a good cause; let it be comfort enough to them that God is both their supporter and avenger. Is it not sufficient to lay all the storms of discontent against their oppressors, that God sees their affliction, and cometh down to deliver and avenge them? *Edward Marbury.*

**Ver. 14. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand,** etc. God considers all your works and ways, and will not you consider the works, the ways of God? Of this be sure, whether you consider the ways of God, his word ways, or work ways, of this be sure, God will consider your ways, certainly he will; those ways of yours which in themselves are not worth the considering or looking upon, your sinful ways, though they are so vile, so abominable, that if yourselves did but look upon them and consider them, you would be utterly ashamed of them; yea, though they are an abomination to God while he beholds them, yet he will behold and consider them. The Lord who is of purer eyes than to behold any the least iniquity, to approve it, will yet behold the greatest of your iniquities, and your most impure ways to consider them. *"Thou, "* saith David, *"beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it:"* God beholdeth the foulest, dirtiest ways of men, their ways of oppression and unrighteousness, their ways of intemperance and lasciviousness, their ways of wrath and maliciousness, at once to detest, detect, and requite them. If God thus considereth the ways of men, even those filthy and crooked ways of men, should not men consider the holy, just, and righteous ways of God? *Joseph Caryl.*

**Ver. 14-18. God delights to help the poor.** He loves to take part with the best, though the weakest side. Contrary to the course of most, who when a controversy arises use to stand in a kind of indifference or neutrality, till they see which part is strongest, not which is most just. Now if there be any consideration (besides the cause) that draws or engages God, it is the weakness of the side. He joins with many, because they are weak, not with any, because they are strong; therefore he is called *the helper of the friendless, and with him the fatherless,* (the orphans) *find mercy.* By fatherless we are not to understand such only whose parents are dead, but any one that is in distress; as Christ promised his disciples; *"I will not leave you orphans,"* that is, helpless, and (as we translate) *comfortless;* though ye are as children without a father, yet I will be a father to you. Men are often like those clouds which dissolve into the sea; they send presents to the rich, and assist the strong; but God sends his rain upon the dry land, and lends his strength to those who are weak... The prophet makes this report to God of himself **(Isa 25:4):** *"Thou hast been a strength to the poor,* a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, "etc. *Joseph Caryl.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 13-14.** Divine government in the world.

1. Who doubt it? and why?  
2. Who believe it? and what does this faith cause them to do?

**Ver. 14.** *(last clause).* A plea for orphans.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 15.** In this verse we hear again the burden of the psalmist's prayer:

**Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.** Let the sinner lose his power to sin; stop the tyrant, arrest the oppressor, weaken the loins of the mighty, and dash in pieces the terrible. They deny thy justice: let them feel it to the full. Indeed, they shall feel it; for God shall hunt the sinner for ever: so long as there is a grain of sin in him it shall be sought out and punished. It is not a little worthy of note, that very few great persecutors have ever died in their beds: the curse has manifestly pursued them, and their fearful sufferings have made them own *that* divine justice at which they could at one time launch defiance. God permits tyrants to arise as thorn hedges to protect his church from the intrusion of hypocrites, and that he may teach his backsliding children by them, as Gideon did the men of Succoth with the briers of the wilderness; but he soon cuts up these Herods, like the thorns, and casts them into the fire. Thales, the Milesian, one of the wise men of Greece, being asked what he thought to be the greatest rarity in the world, replied, "To see a tyrant live to be an old man." See how the Lord breaks, not only the arm, but the neck of proud oppressors! To the men who had neither justice nor mercy for the saints, there shall be rendered justice to the full, but not a grain of mercy.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 14-18. God delights to help the poor. See Psalms on "Ps 10:14"** for further information.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

None.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 16-18.** The Psalm ends with a song of thanksgiving to the great and everlasting King, because he has granted the desire of his humble and oppressed people, has defended the fatherless, and punished the heathen who trampled upon his poor and afflicted children. Let us learn that we are sure to speed well, if we carry our complaint to the King of kings. Rights will be vindicated, and wrongs redressed, at his throne. His government neglects not the interests of the needy, nor does it tolerate oppression in the mighty. Great God, we leave ourselves in thine hand; to thee we commit thy church afresh. Arise, O God, and let the man of the earth- the creature of a day- be broken before the majesty of thy power. Come, Lord Jesus, and glorify thy people. Amen and Amen.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 14-18. God delights to help the poor. See Psalms on "Ps 10:14"** for further information.

**Ver. 16. The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.** Such confidence and faith must appear to the world strange and unaccountable. It is like what his fellow citizens may be supposed to have felt (if the story be true) toward that man of whom it is recorded, that his powers of vision were so extraordinary, that he could distinctly see the fleet of the Carthaginians entering the harbour of Carthage, while he stood himself at Lilyboeum, in Sicily. A man seeing across an ocean, and able to tell of objects so far off! he could feast his vision on what others saw not. Even thus does faith now stand at its Lilyboeum, and see the long tossed fleet entering safely the desired haven, enjoying the bliss of that still distant day, as if it were already come. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 16.** The Eternal Kingship of Jehovah.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 16-18. See Psalms on "Ps 10:16"** for further information.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 17**.. There is a humbling act of faith put forth in prayer. Others style it praying in humility; give me leave to style it praying in faith. In faith which sets the soul in the presence of that mighty God, and by the sight of him, which faith gives us, it is that we see our own vileness, sinfulness, and abhor ourselves, and profess ourselves unworthy of any, much less of those mercies we are to seek for. Thus the sight of God had wrought in the prophet **(Isa 6:5),** "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And holy Job speaks thus **(Job 42:5-6)**, "Now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is as great a requisite to prayer as any other act; I may say of it alone, as the apostle **(Jas 1:7)**, that without it we shall receive nothing at the hands of God! God loves to fill empty vessels, he looks to broken hearts. In the Psalms how often do we read that God hears the prayers of the humble; which always involves and includes faith in it. **Ps 9:12**, "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble, "and **Ps 10:17, Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.** To be deeply humbled is to have the heart prepared and fitted for God to hear the prayer; and therefore you find the psalmist pleading *sub forma pauperis,* often repeating, "I am poor and needy." And this prevents our thinking much if God do not grant the particular thing we do desire. Thus also Christ himself in his great distress **(Ps 22:1-31)**, doth treat God **(Ps 22:2)**, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season am not silent. Our fathers trusted in thee. They cried unto thee, and were delivered. But I am a worm, and no man; reproached of men, and despised of the people; **(Ps 22:6)** "and he was "heard" in the end "in what he feared." And these deep humblings of ourselves, being joined with vehement implorations upon the mercy of God to obtain, is reckoned into the account of praying by faith, both by God and Christ. Mt 8:1-34. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Ver. 17. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble.** A spiritual prayer is a *humble* prayer. Prayer is the asking of an alms, which requires humility. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." **Lu 18:13.** God's incomprehensible glory may even amaze us and strike a holy consternation into us when we approach nigh unto him: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee." **Ezr 9:6.** It is comely to see a poor nothing lie prostrate at the feet of its Maker. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." **Ge 18:27**. The lower the heart descends, the higher the prayer ascends. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 17. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble,** etc. How pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account, and that of the divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, *that they have been obtained by prayer! Robert Leighton.*

**Ver. 17. The desire of the humble.** Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God in the name of Christ, for such things as are agreeable to his will. It is an offering of our *desires.* Desires are the soul and life of prayer; words are but the body; now as the body without the soul is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated with our desires: *"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble."* God heareth not words, but *desires. Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 17.** God's choice acquaintances are humble men. *Robert Leighton.*

**Ver. 17.** He that sits nearest the dust, sits nearest heaven. *Andrew Gray, of Glasgow,* 1616.

**Ver. 17.** There is a kind of omnipotence in prayer, as having an interest and prevalence with God's omnipotence. It hath loosed iron chains **(Ac 16:25-26);** it hath opened iron gates **(Ac 12:5-10)**; it hath unlocked the windows of heaven **(1Ki 18:41);** it hath broken the bars of death **(Joh 11:40,43).** Satan hath three titles given in the Scriptures, setting forth his malignity against the church of God: a dragon, to note his malice; a serpent, to note his subtlety; and a lion, to note his strength. But none of all these can stand before prayer. The greatest malice of Haman sinks under the prayer of Esther; the deepest policy, the counsel of Ahithophel, withers before the prayer of David; the largest army, a host of a thousand Ethiopians, run away like cowards before the prayer of Asa. *Edward Reynolds,* 1599-1676.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 17.** *(first clause).*

1. The Christian's character- humble.  
2. An attribute of the Christian's whole life- **desire:** he desires more holiness, communion, knowledge, grace, and usefulness; and then he desires glory.   
3. The Christian's great blessedness - *"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble."*

**Ver. 17.** *(whole verse).*

1. Consider the *nature* of gracious desires.   
2. Their *origin.*3. Their *result.*

The three sentences readily suggest these divisions, and the subject may be very profitable.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 16-18. See Psalms on "Ps 10:18"** for further information.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS**

**Ver. 18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,** etc. The tears of the poor fall down upon their cheeks, *et ascendunt ad coelum*, and go up to heaven and cry for vengeance before God, the judge of widows, the father of widows and orphans. Poor people be oppressed even by laws. Woe worth to them that make evil laws against the poor, what shall be to them that hinder and mar good laws? What will ye do in the day of great vengeance when God shall visit you? he saith he will hear the tears of the poor women, when he goeth on visitation. For their sake he will hurt the judge, be he never so high, he will for widows' sakes change realms, bring them into temptation, pluck the judges' skins over their heads. Cambyses was a great emperor, such another as our master is, he had many lord deputies, lord presidents, and lieutenants under him. It is a great while ago since I read the history. It chanced he had under him in one of his dominions a briber, a gift taker, a gratifier of rich men; he followed gifts as fast as he that followed the pudding; a hand maker in his office, to make his son a great man, as the old saying is, "Happy is the child whose father goeth to the devil." The cry of the poor widow came to the emperor's ear, and caused him to slay the judge quick, and laid his skin in his chair of judgment, that all judges that should give judgment afterward, should sit in the same skin. Surely it was a goodly sign, a goodly monument, the sign of the judges skin. I pray God we may once see the sign of the skin in England. Ye will say, peradventure, that this is cruelly and uncharitably spoken. No, no; I do it charitably, for a love I bear to my country. God saith, "I will visit." God hath two visitations; the first is when he revealeth his word by preachers; and where the first is accepted, the second cometh not. The second visitation is vengeance. He went to visitation when he brought the judges skin over his ears. If this word be despised, he cometh with the second visitation with vengeance. *Hugh Latimer,* 1480-1555.

**Ver. 18. Man of the earth,** etc. In the eighth Psalm (which is a circular Psalm, ending as it did begin, "O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the world!" That whithersoever we turn our eyes, upwards or downwards, we may see ourselves beset with his glory round about), how doth the prophet base and discountenance the nature and whole race of man; as may appear by his disdainful and derogatory interrogation, "What is man that thou art mindful of him; and the Son of Man, that thou regardest him?" In **Ps 9:19-20,** "Rise, Lord; let not man have the upper hand; let the nations be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know themselves to be but men." Further, in **Ps 10:18,** "Thou judgest the fatherless and the poor, that the man of the earth do no more violence."

The Psalms, as they go in order, so, I think they grow in strength, and each hath a weightier force to throw down our presumption. 1. We are "men, "and the "sons of men, "to show our descent and propagation.

2. "Men in our own knowledge, "to show that conscience and experience of infirmity doth convict us. 3. "Men of the earth, "to show our original matter whereof we are framed. In Ps 22:1-31, he addeth more disgrace; for either in his own name, regarding the misery and contempt wherein he was held, or in the person of Christ, whose figure he was, as if it were robbery for him to take upon him the nature of man, he falleth to a lower style, *at ego sum vermis et non vir;* but I am a worm, and no man. For as corruption is the father of all flesh, so are the worms his brethren and sisters according to the old verse-

"First man, next worms, then stench and loathsomeness, Thus man to no man alters by changes."

Abraham, the father of the faithful **(Ge 18:27)**, sifts himself into the coarsest man that can be, and resolves his nature into the elements whereof it first rose: "Behold I have begun to speak to my Lord, being dust and ashes." And if any of the children of Abraham, who succeed him in the faith, or any of the children of Adam, who succeed him in the flesh, thinketh otherwise, let him know that there is a threefold cord twisted by the finger of God, that shall tie him to his first original, though he contend till his heart break. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" **(Jer 22:29)**; that is, earth by creation, earth by continuance, earth by resolution. Thou camest earth, thou remainest earth, and to earth thou must return. *John King.*

**Ver. 18. The man of the earth.** Man dwelling in the earth, and made of earth. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

None.