

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.  
**THE PSALMS.**

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ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY,  
SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC,  
GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND  
FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES  
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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**THE PSALMS.**

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## THE PSALMS.

### PSALM XXVII.

VERS. 1-14. **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**—*Implicit trust:*—This psalm was written by a man who was at the moment far down in the depths of spiritual conflict, and yet was holding a steady front against his troubles, after all. He prays so passionately, that we should deem him weak even to cowardice, if it were not for the fact that he praises so jubilantly, and lifts his head with a most unsubdued ring in his voice. The psalm is like a summer cloud just before a storm, in that it reserves an overcharge of power to be driven on by a sort of induction into the very verge of the final verse, from which it explodes with a glorious flash of lightning, which clears the air instantly. What are the conditions of implicit trust in the Lord of our salvation, such trust as will ensure peace and comfort? It is likely that most of God's children, sooner or later, are permitted to journey on wearily over what seemed a highway, only to find, at the last, the sign inscribed, "No thoroughfare here." A grim kind of consolation enters one's heart as he murmurs, "Some one has been here before to put up the guideboard, at any rate!" 1. The main condition of resting in the Lord is found in looking outside of one's self. There is a habit of morbid self-examination which needs to be shunned. Some experiences there are which are too delicate to bear this rude analysis. A woman's love for her husband, a child's confidence in his father, could be disturbed fatally and for ever, if only half as much violence were brought to bear upon it as some Christians are accustomed to exert upon their religious feelings. One can tear himself all to pieces, to no sort of profit, and to every sort of harm. The Lord is the one to look at, not ourselves. 2. The next condition of spiritual repose is found in the avoiding of unwise counsellors. We must learn to trust our trust, and not keep rooting it up. No plant grows which is continually being rooted up. 3. Another condition of rest in God is found in drawing a clear distinction between historic faith and saving faith. What secures to us a perfect salvation is spiritual trust in the Saviour, and this is the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is easy to receive facts, perhaps, but not so easy to understand experiences which lie deeper than any mere outward acts. Historic faith is not necessarily saving faith. 4. We are to cultivate confidence in the slowly reached answers to our prayers for Divine grace. 5. We must distinguish between emotions and religious states. The one may vary, the other is fixed. Faith is a very different thing from the result of faith; and confidence of faith is even a different thing from faith itself; and yet the safety of the soul depends on faith, and on nothing else. We are justified by faith; not by joy or peace or love or hope or zeal. These last are the results of faith, generally, and will depend largely upon temperament and education. 6. This unbroken courage is a condition of rest. David said that he came near to fainting, and should have done it, only he kept on believing to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. We must not think everything is lost when we happen to have become beclouded. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Confidence in God:*—This psalm is an instance of what an old divine has called "confidence in God the best succour in the worst seasons." I. THE OCCASION OF THIS CONFIDENCE. In David's case we find this confidence—I. In times of peril. The true children of God are oft in peril, and at such times nothing can stand



them in such stead as this assured confidence. Luther felt it at Worms. Armed with it, the Christian may ever look even death calmly in the face. Man without it is in time of peril like a ship without anchor in the fury of the storm. 2. In times of privation. Apparently David was (ver. 4) in exile, and deprived of the privileges of worship in the house of God. But he found his great support in his confidence in God. 3. In times of desertion. When he needed friends most, the ranks were thinnest, his standard most deserted. But he had a Friend who would never forsake him. Happy the man who, amidst general unfaithfulness, has found the great treasure of a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. 4. In times of calumny. A bitter element in David's cup were false witnesses and slanderers. II. SOME OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS CONFIDENCE RESTS. 1. The nature of God Himself in His personal relation to us: "My Light, my Salvation . . . the Strength of my life." It is not what we are, but what God is, that affords a solid ground of confidence in time of trouble. There is an emphasis on that pronoun *my* which speaks of an eternal covenant, an appropriating faith, a mystical union. 2. Previous interpositions of God for our help. Ver. 2 evidently refers to a period in the psalmist's past history when he was delivered from great danger. As the child of God looks back on the way by which the Lord has led him, and sees how Divine strength has been made manifest in his weakness, confident is he that the grace which has brought him thus far will lead him safely home. 3. The religious experiences he has enjoyed (ver. 8). 4. The promises of God received and rested on by faith. III. THE FRUITS OF THIS CONFIDENCE. 1. Complete deliverance from all fear (ver. 1). Fear is unworthy one to whom Jehovah stands in such relations. 2. A positive sense of security from all harm. Jehovah, the Captain of our salvation, takes the timid soul into His own royal tent. 3. A well-spring of happiness. The Christian life has its hosannahs as well as its misereres—its notes of joyous triumph as well as its plaintive "songs in the night." (*T. H. Witherspoon, D.D.*) A psalm for life's storms.—I. COURAGE IN LIFE'S STORMS. 1. This courage is founded on confidence in God. When the soul feels God with it, it becomes invincible. 2. It is heightened by memories of past deliverance. Recollection of past mercies strengthens our faith in future supplies. 3. It defies all future enemies, and faces the mysterious future with a jubilant soul. II. SHELTER IN LIFE'S STORMS. 1. The scene where the shelter is sought. The house of the Lord: the place where He specially manifests Himself to His people. 2. The means by which the shelter is to be secured. Dwelling with God; delighting in God; inquiring after God. 3. The source from which it is to be derived. God Himself. 4. The spirit in which it is accepted. Confidence and praise. III. PRAYER IN LIFE'S STORMS. The prayer is—1. An earnest appeal to mercy for relief. 2. It expresses ready compliance with the Divine request. God requires us to seek His favour, not because we can induce Him to be more merciful; nor because our prayer can merit His favours; but because earnest prayer qualifies the suppliant to rightly receive, appreciate, and use the blessing sought. 3. It deprecates the disfavour of God as a terrible evil. 4. It recognizes the transcendent character of Divine friendship. Though all forsake, He remains faithful. 4. It indicates the true method of safety. Obedience to Divine law; interposition for Divine help. IV. SELF-EXHORTATION IN LIFE'S STORMS. "I had fainted unless," etc. An admonishment to himself to be strong. 1. Faith in Divine goodness. The vision of Divine goodness is the only moral tonic for the soul. 2. Consecration to the Divine service. To wait upon the Lord is to serve Him lovingly, thoroughly, faithfully, practically; and such service is moral strength. (*Homilist.*) Confidence in God:—The Psalms are the outbreathings of the universal heart, a voice for man at all times. We are here reminded of—I. A PROFOUND SENSE OF NEED AND DANGER. This psalm is the cry of a soul in distress. David's throne, honour, wealth, did not exempt him from suffering; rather they became occasions of distress. To all, the sky of life is often overcast, its path lies along a toilsome way, with burdens too heavy to be borne. Where find rest and safety? II. THE SECURITY OF TRUSTING IN GOD. God was his Light, and in the consciousness of that light he could see that all things worked together for good to them that love God. The Lord was his Salvation; his safety was assured. Cast into a fiery furnace, One appears with the Christian whose form is like the Son of God. God was the Strength of his life, awakening holy impulses, irradiating his whole spiritual being. III. THE NECESSITY OF APPOINTED MEANS IN COMMUNING WITH GOD. In the sanctuary, in the place and in the way of Divine appointment, the psalmist was filled with a sense of the Divine presence. There God's light,

salvation, strength, appeared in a reality and beauty nowhere else displayed. There God appeared not in nature, but in grace; not as a power, but as a Person; not as Creator, but as Redeemer. The psalmist therefore longed for the sanctuary.

**IV. OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS INDISPENSABLE TO CONFIDING INTERCOURSE WITH HIM.** At once he would seek, and actively seek, the Lord's face. There is no real confidence in God without loyalty: obedience is the only atmosphere on which the wing of faith can rise. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The Christian's boast:*—David was a boaster, but it was in God; hence it was lawful: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." In any other source of confidence it is unlawful and dangerous. **I. THE "ONE THING" OF WHICH DAVID HERE SPEAKS.** The abiding sense of the Divine presence. The temple, or "house of the Lord," was the place of God's special manifestations. Abiding in this presence will give—1. Light—the light of His countenance. It is one thing to abide in our own or in other light—as "the Pharisee" and Zaccheus; a different thing to be in the light of God's face or presence. This light does two things: it reveals to us God, and shows us what *sin* is; it reveals God to us, and shows us what salvation is—making the Lord to be our salvation. 2. Satan may accuse, but, if God acquits, whom shall we fear? If the Law has been satisfied, the debt paid, we need fear neither penalties nor imprisonment. There is a second sense in which the Lord is light and salvation. No longer "afraid" of the condemning power of sin, we are warranted in standing in fear of its ruling power in our hearts. Therefore we are exhorted to "work out our salvation." To do this we need the light to guide us into all truth, the salvation to deliver us from all evil. 3. Strength. "If God be for us" strength is on our side. 4. "The beauty of the Lord." The beauty of His attributes, as they meet and harmonize for our blessing. The beauty, too, reflected in us; for in His light and salvation and strength we are "changed into the same image." 5. Joy and singing. When our joy is dependent on the consciousness of what we are or ought to be to God, it is a very uncertain joy, and will rarely produce singing, but rather sighing. But when it is dependent on the sense of what God is to us, then we can say, "I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy." To have this joy we must be taken out of *self*.

**II. THE CONDITION OF ATTAINING THIS "ONE THING."** We must "seek after it." We must "wait on the Lord." To navigate the sea of life we must keep the eye fixed on this one thing, on the one magnet—Christ. Paul did this, which made his bark "press toward" the haven with such grace and nobility. (*The Study.*) *The Christian's triumph:*—A beautiful affirmation; important possession; glorious triumph. **I. THE AFFIRMATION.** 1. The Lord is light in nature. "All things were made by Him." All light in nature comes from God's Son, who is emphatically the Light of the world. 2. In the sphere of reason. God made man with a mind to know, a will to obey, a heart to love—elevated far above the rest of creation. By sin the mind is darkened, the will perverse, the heart depraved. Hence—3. God is light in the sphere of grace. Man, by the Fall, deprived himself and the race of "those divine gifts"; hence the need of a Redeemer. This we have: "the Lord is salvation." Light shows us where and what we are—lost, ruined, dead. Christ, our salvation, brings us from the depths of the Fall, recreates us, imparts to us His Spirit, righteousness and life. **II. A MOST IMPORTANT POSSESSION.** "My light," "my salvation." The beauty of the Psalms is in the pronouns. Light must be in us, or we walk in darkness; bread be eaten, or we starve; so an unapplied Saviour is no Saviour to man. This possession is ours only as we stand in living union with Christ Jesus our Lord. **III. THE GLORIOUS TRIUMPH.** "Whom shall I fear?" etc. In possession of Christ's light and life, the Christian need fear neither sickness, death, grave, nor hell. Over all these he has complete victory (Rom. viii. 34-39). (*J. Hassler, D.D.*) *David's confidence in God:*—**I. WHAT GOD WAS TO DAVID.** 1. The fountain of gladness to his heart. 2. The author of safety to his person. 3. The giver of strength and might, for the preservation of his life. Uses—1. For instruction. (1) God's all-sufficiency in Himself, for all His children. (2) The happy estate of those who are in covenant with God. 2. For admonition. (1) Search and try whether God be that to us which He was to David. (2) If we find defect we must give all diligence thereunto (2 Pet. i. 5). (3) In the fruition of any of these blessings, see whither to return the honour and praise, viz. to God. 3. For comfort. **II. WHAT BENEFIT DAVID REAPED THEREBY.** Having the Lord for his God, he is armed against all fear of men or other creatures (Ps. cxviii. 6; xxiii. 1-4; iii. 3-6). Uses—1. For instruction. (1) There is great gain in true godliness, and much

fruit in religion, to those who attain to true righteousness (1 Tim. vi. 0; Ps. lvi. 11). (2) See here the true ground of the difference between the wicked and the godly, about slavish fear and godly boldness (Prov. xviii. 1). The godly have the Lord with them and for them, and that makes them bold; but the wicked have the Lord against them, and that strikes their hearts with fear and dread. 2. For admonition. (1) Unless God be for us, the heart will fail when evils come. And none have the Lord for them but those that stand rightly in covenant with God; repenting of their sins, believing in the Lord Jesus, and walking in new obedience. (2) Those who have true courage and comfort in evil times must learn hence to give God all the glory (Ps. xviii. 29). (*T. Pierson.*) *The pathway of power*:—Light—salvation—strength: three great waves of the sea, telling that the tide can rise no higher. The tide is full. Even so it is with the heart that can say—I. THE LORD IS MY LIGHT. 1. In the natural world God gives us a night between every two days, and in the life beyond we hear of a bow of emerald that breaks the dazzle of the great white throne. Light means truth, and, as it advances in precision and purity, the steps of discovered truth become the songs of degrees with which the tribes go up to the great temple of God. 2. In the spiritual life, both as regards salvation and service, much depends on clearness of vision, and knowledge of how and where to look and what to look for. II. THE LORD IS MY SALVATION. The words "Christ for us" have now a clear and exact meaning, setting forth the condition and character of salvation. And before Christ was crucified for sinners, the main feature of salvation was the same; it was from the Lord, a gift from His hand. "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." Sin was then also a transgression, a taint, and a tyranny, and from all the Lord delivered. It was His to deliver the soul from death, the eyes from tears, and the feet from falling. This fact at once humbled and upheld him; it was the Lord's gift, and yet it was his own possession. And so he could say—"Whom shall I fear? The Lord is my salvation." III. THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH. Light for the understanding and its judgment; salvation for the heart, its hardness and anxiety; and strength for action and usefulness. How often we come to the Lord, like James and John, and say "we are able"; but the Lord makes a thorough work of the first and second, the light and salvation, before He entrusts us with the third, the strength on which He puts His own almighty name. We often bring misery upon ourselves, and darkness upon others, by trying to come into the Lord's service before coming to the Lord Himself. Let us seek the power in the pathway of power:—light, salvation, strength. (*G. M. Mackie, M.A.*) *The Divine Light*:—I. DAVID SAYS THIS. He is in exile, engaged in some struggle on the frontiers of his kingdom: his foes have received a check: he is closely watched, but is, nevertheless, confident of victory. This is the only occasion in which David speaks of the Lord as his Light: the expression occurs only twice in the Old Testament. Micah says, "the Lord shall be a light unto me." In other places light is spoken of as God's gift—the light of revelation and of conscience. But here David says, "the Lord is my light." David's life was one of great vicissitude, and his temperament was very changeable. Hence he was liable to great depression, especially through the recollection of his awful sins—adulterer and murderer that he was. And yet he was a man after God's own heart, because a man's life is to be judged not by its exceptional acts, but by its governing principles. Nevertheless, David was damaged deeply and permanently by his sins. But they did not destroy, though they did deface his real character, his profound religious sense of God's presence and claims. The leading acts of a man's life may look one way, the governing principles of his life another. Philip II. of Spain encouraged and paid for the publication of the second great polyglot Bible that was ever printed. But how wrong it would be to infer from that one action what manner of man he was. And so with David: his exceptional acts do not reveal him in his real character and mind. Saul had no depth of character: moral levity and indifference to the claims of God are constantly chargeable against him. But David's sins, though terrible, were but temporary, and never became the habit of his life, and they did not extinguish in him his deep love of God. Hence, still he could say, "The Lord is my light." II. Apply the words TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. In their deepest sense they can apply to none else. He whom Jesus said was greatest of woman-born—John the Baptist—was yet "not that light, but came to bear witness of that light." Christ alone could say, "I am the light of the world." Some of us may remember that great work of

Christian genius, called the "Notte": it is by Correggio, and is reckoned amongst the chief of the art treasures of the Dresden Gallery. In it the Divine infant is represented as with a body almost transparent with light, and from Him all around are illuminated, and in proportion to their nearness to Him. It is a representation on canvas of a great moral and spiritual truth. For Christ is the one light of men. III. TO THE CHURCH. Was it not so in the days of persecution? Read the history of the martyrdom of Stephen. IV. TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. Our text is the motto of the University of Oxford, and expresses the truth that education apart from Him is vain. V. TO THE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE. Then refer to Him all teaching, all content. "Lead, kindly Light . . . lead Thou me on." (*Canon Liddon.*) *Facts and arguments*:—I. THE FACTS. 1. "The Lord is my light and my salvation." The soul is assured of it, and therefore declares it boldly. Into the soul at the new birth Divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation. Where there is not enough light to reveal our own darkness, and to make us long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. After conversion our God is our Joy, Comfort, Guide, Teacher, and, in every sense, our Light: He is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Not merely does He give light or salvation; He is light, He is salvation; he, then, who has laid hold upon God has all covenant blessings in his possession. 2. "The Lord is the strength of my life." Here is a third epithet to show the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. II. THE ARGUMENTS. 1. "Whom shall I fear?" A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared; for the Lord, our light, destroys them. The damnation of hell is not to be dreaded; for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath: that rested on the conceited vigour of an arm of flesh; this on the real power of the omnipotent I AM. 2. "Of whom shall I be afraid?" Our life derives all its strength from God: we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the enemy. This bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God be for us, who can be against us," either now or in time to come? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ the True Light*:—In the New Testament, the idea which is hinted at in the language of David is expressly revealed as a truth. God does not merely give us His light. He is light, just as He is love in His own uncreated nature. "God is light," says St. John, "and in Him is no darkness at all." When St. John would teach us our Lord's Godhead as clearly and sharply as possible, he calls Him the "light," meaning to teach us that as such He shares the essential nature of the Deity. He is "light," because He is what He is—absolute perfection in respect of intellectual truth, absolute perfection in respect of moral beauty. And hence those momentous words, "I am the light of the world"; and hence that confession of the Christian creed, "God of God, Light of Light." Thus the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was to the spiritual world what the rising of the sun is in the world of nature. It had effects even upon the orders of the heavenly intelligences, of which St. Paul hints in his Epistle to the Ephesians. But, for the human soul, it meant a passing from darkness to light, from warmth to sunshine. And thus a prophet had bidden Zion arise and shine since her Lord was come, and the glory of the Lord had risen upon her; for He was announced as the Sun of Righteousness who should arise with healing in His wings, so that although darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, yet the Lord should arise upon Zion, and His glory be seen upon her. And, in the Benedictus, Zechariah salutes Him as "the day-star come on high, who hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." And Simeon, holding the Divine Saviour in his arms, says that He is "a Light to lighten the Gentiles"; and himself felt that the word of prophecy was fulfilled, when the people who walked in darkness had seen a great light; and they that were in the region and shadow of death, on them hath the Gospel light shined. Some of us may remember that great work of Christian genius, the picture of the Nativity—the "Notte," as it is called, of Correggio, which is among the treasures of the Dresden Gallery. In it the Divine Infant is represented as with a body almost transparent with light; and from Him all around are illuminated. His mother, His foster-father, the angels who bend in adoration, they are illuminated in the ratio of their nearness to Him. And this is but a representation on canvas of spiritual and eternal truth. He is the one Light of the intellectual and moral world; and we are in the light just so far, and only so far, as we are near to

Him. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Light and salvation*.—The combination of the two ideas, "light and salvation," is very suggestive. Light is essential to life, health, and growth. What wonderful medicinal efficacy it possesses! There is no tonic like it. It imparts that green hue by means of which the plant changes inorganic into organic matter, creates and conserves what everything else consumes and destroys, and acts as the mediator between the world of death and the world of life. Take away the light from man, and immediately he becomes a prey to the dead, inert forces of nature. The tissues of his body degenerate, and the powers of his mind decay. It affects the stature, the blood, the hair, the liver, the whole body inwardly and outwardly. Under solar radiation, sickness is more speedily cured, wounds heal more rapidly, and the healthy acquire fresh vigour and elevated vitality. It is difficult even to express the full enjoyment of all the senses, except by metaphors drawn from light. Owing to this healing, life-giving power of natural light, we see how it becomes the salvation of the natural man. And in regard to our souls, the Lord is our salvation because He is our light. The plant instinctively and inevitably turns to the sunlight, wherever it is, because the sunlight is its salvation, its very life. Shut out from the light, it can neither live nor grow. A plant growing in a cellar, where but a feeble ray of light penetrates, is a dwarfed and forced growth, exhausting all there is in its seed or bulb mechanically, but adding no new material of growth, without any sign of inward vitality or promise of perennial production. It is a weak, blanched ghost of a plant, without any sap in its veins, or colour in its leaves, without any power to produce blossoms or fruit. But bring the miserable shadow of life out into the open sunshine, and it recovers itself; its white, brittle stem becomes green and full of sap; its leaves assume their natural vivid hue, and open out their blades in the golden air. The whole plant revives as if by magic, and speedily puts forth its beautiful blossom and fruit. What the sunlight is to the plant, God is to the soul. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Man's True Light*.—When we were at New York, Professor Simpson and I went one night to the observatory. We found the astronomer by the light of a small candle, groping about for his instruments, and arranging the telescope. But when he had got the star full in view he blew out his little candle. He had now got the light of the world, and the candle served only to obscure his view. The dim light of your reason is of use only if it brings you to the Great Light. (*Henry Drummond.*) **Whom shall I fear?**—*The believer's freedom from fear*.—This is not the language of vain presumption, or the boastful utterance of affected boldness, but the confident, yet humble, utterance of Christian assurance. **I. SHALL WE BE AFRAID OF GOD?** 1. Is He not revealed as a sin-hating God? And are not all men sinners? How comes it, then, that the Christian man, though sensible of many infirmities, shortcomings, and aggravated sins—sins of thought, of word, and of deed—can say that he has no cause to be afraid of God? It is because of the new relation into which he is brought to God by virtue of his union to Christ, and of what Christ has done for him. The work of Christ was to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God. Nor is this all. Every believer in Christ becomes a partaker of the Divine nature, sustaining a relation to him near and dear as that which His own Son sustained. 2. Is not the Christian exposed to temptation? May he not be stripped of the safeguard which Divine grace has thrown around him, and be exposed again to the dread vengeance of an insulted God? No; though he may fall, yet shall he rise again. So long as he is Christ's he has nothing to fear from God, but everything to hope. The love of God dwelling in him, there is no place for fear, for "perfect love casteth out fear." **II. SHALL WE FEAR THE LAW?** "Cursed is every one that continueth not," etc. "He that offendeth in one point," etc. If a man's life is to be brought to the test of the law, if he is to stand on the footing of his own merits in the eye of the law, then, indeed, is his condition hopeless, for "there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Now though all this be true, it is no less true that even of the law the Christian has no need to be afraid. To him it is invested with no terrors, on him it never flashes its lightning, against him it never peals its thunders, and why? Why, just because "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and of death." Why? Because "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." **III. SHALL WE FEAR SATAN?** When we think of the life he has led us, the misery in which he has involved

us, the grinding nature of that servitude he exacts from every one who is led captive by him at his will, we may well tremble at the thought of such an onerous, for unless we are ransomed from his hands by a mightier power than our own, well may we say that he is indeed a power to be feared. But it is only when under his power that this can truly be said of him. It cannot be so said of the believer, for his position is altered to Satan, and Satan's is altered to him. Christ "has taken the prey from the mighty, and spoiled the captive of the terrible one." IV. SHALL WE FEAR AFFLICTION? To fear it would be to mistrust the promises, and to doubt the faithfulness of Him by whom these promises are made. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," etc. V. SHALL WE FEAR DEATH? Death, which the world calls "the king of terrors," and which wicked men feel to be such! Death, which for six thousand years has lorded it over the human race, and to whose sceptre countless myriads are yet destined to bow! Shall we not be afraid of death? No! To the Christian there is nothing in death to make him afraid. To the Christian all his power is over the material, not over the spiritual; over the body, not over the soul; and even over the body not long. To the Christian he comes as an angel of mercy, as a messenger of peace. (*H. Hyslop.*) *The fearlessness of the good*:—I. SPRINGS FROM PERSONAL FAITH IN GOD. 1. Intelligent. 2. Appropriating. 3. Soul-saving. II. STRENGTHENED BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF PAST DELIVERANCES. Confidence comes of experience. The remedy we have proved we readily try again. The friend we have found faithful we trust to death. The commander under whom we have conquered we follow bravely to other fields. So should we act as to God. III. SUFFICIENT FOR THE GREATEST EMERGENCIES. What terror had Ahab for Micaiah, the man who had seen God? (1 Kings xxii. 19). What cared Elisha for "the horses and chariots" at Dothan, whose eyes beheld the angels of God ranged in his defence? (2 Kings vi. 15). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *David's preventive of fear*:—The heroic man shows us the secret of his heroism. I. THE LORD WAS THE PSALMIST'S LIGHT. Few things man recoils more from than darkness, whether physical, or of ignorance or of sin. This fear was no longer possible to David. He even anticipates John's grand utterance, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." What light was and ever had been to the world, the Lord was to David. II. THE LORD WAS HIS SALVATION. As man dreads darkness, so he dreads captivity and oppression. David rejoices in God as his salvation. This conception of God first found expression in the song of Moses (Exod. xv. 4), when God led the children of Israel through the Red Sea into the light and calm of day. The word "salvation" is Jeshua—Joshua—Jesus. So near does David come to the parallel Gospel phrase: "He shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Thus the psalmist gripped in advance two of the central truths of the Gospel—God as light and as salvation. In face of these assurances he asks, "Whom shall I fear?" This is the question of every reformer, who, in the strength of a mighty conviction, in the inspiration of high aims, goes to the help of the Lord against the mighty. III. THE LORD WAS THE STRENGTH—THE STRONGHOLD—OF HIS LIFE. The word has a more subtle meaning still. David looks upon God as the Life of his life, the Father of his spirit. He thus falls back upon a third Gospel truth: "God is a Spirit." David's life was in possession of a power which needed not to fear any foe. By a mighty faith he drew upon God's omnipotence: he had not only enough obedience to be active, he had enough to be restful; and that power is greater than all other. Many a man, like John the Baptist, has courage and enthusiasm enough for the rush and battle of life, but falters when withdrawn into the hush of it, to await the oncoming of the foe. The strength of the psalmist enabled him to pass from "Whom shall I fear?" to "Of whom, then, shall I be afraid?" Therefore the second verse followed naturally: "When the wicked . . . they stumbled and fell." (*D. Davies.*) *Fear banished*:—Having God as his light and salvation, the psalmist might well say, "Whom shall I fear?" Having his heart at rest in God, and having his times in God's hands, what cause for fear remained? With peace within, and light without, he was raised above all earthly fears. His eyes were opened; and while he was compassed about with foes innumerable and most formidable, he saw himself at the same time surrounded with horses and chariots of fire, and realized that greater was He that was with him than all that could be against him; that the hostile things and persons of life could have no power at all against him, were it not given

them for wise and gracious purposes by his heavenly Father. And so, if we fear God, we need know no other fear. That divine fear, like the space which the American settler burns around him as a defence against the prairie fire, clears a circle, within which we are absolutely safe. The old necromancists believed that if a man was master of himself, he enjoyed complete immunity from all danger; if his will was firmly set, the powers of evil could not harm him; he could defy a host of devils raging around. Against the malice of human and infernal power, the citadel of a man's heart that is set upon God is impregnable. It is sin alone that is adverse to us; it is sin that makes cowards of us all. The soul infected with this radical evil is weak, and open to all adversities. Everything is adverse to it. It is out of harmony with God's universe. But let this primary adversity of sin be removed, and all secondary adversities vanish; all things work together for good to them that fear the Lord. All providence becomes to us special providence; all things are eager and tender ministers to us. More important interests are involved in our salvation than in the fate of the whole natural creation; and sooner than a hair of our head shall be injured, God would bury the whole physical world in ruin. "God is our refuge and strength." Perfect trust in God is perfect peace. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

**The Lord is the strength of my life.—David's strength.**—The keynote of David's character is not the assertion of his own strength, but the confession of his own weakness. Nevertheless, he had strength, and that of no common order: he was an eminently powerful, able, and successful man. But he says it was from God. Even his physical prowess he ascribes to God. It is by God's help he slays the lion and the bear, and has nerve to kill Goliath. It is God who makes his feet like harts' feet, and enables him to leap over the walls of the mountain fortresses. And no doubt this was so: it is not mere metaphor. David was not likely to have been a man of gigantic strength. So delicate a brain was probably coupled to a delicate body. But it is as the fount of light and goodness in his own soul that he chiefly thinks of God. In a word, David is a man of faith and prayer. And it is this which sustains him in every trouble, and gives enthusiasm and fire, life and reality, to his triumphant psalms. He had the firm conviction that God was the deliverer of all who trust in Him. And the same faith it is which gives to his penitence its manly tone, free from all cowardly cries of terror. He sees no angry, but a forgiving God, though he knows he is to be punished for the rest of his life. But he utterly trusts God, and is sure that God will restore him to goodness that He may thereby restore him to usefulness. Hence it is God demands not torturing penance or sacrifice, but the heart, the broken and contrite heart. It is such utterances as these which have given their priceless value to the little book of the psalms of David. Every form of human sorrow, doubt, struggle, error, sin; the nun agonizing in the cloister; the settler struggling for life in Transatlantic forests; the pauper shivering over the embers in his hovel, and waiting for kind death; the man of business striving to keep his honour pure amid the temptations of commerce; the prodigal son starving in the far country, and recollecting the words which he learnt long ago at his mother's knee; the peasant boy trudging a-field in the chill dawn, and remembering that the Lord is his Shepherd, therefore he will not want—all shapes of humanity have found, and will find to the end of time, a word said to their inmost hearts, and for them, to the living God of heaven by the vast humanity of David, the man after God's own heart; the most thoroughly human figure which had appeared upon the earth before the coming of that perfect Son of man, who is over all, God blessed for ever. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. **They stumbled and fell.**—*God's preservation of David in extreme danger.*—I. THE STATE AND CONDITION OF DAVID'S ENEMIES. They are wicked men. The reason whereof is the enmity put by God Himself between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. iii. 15), which David found (Ps. xxxviii. 19, 20; John xv. 15; xvi. 33). Uses—1. For instruction. The godly must expect bitter opposition and enmity from the wicked (Matt. x. 16). 2. For admonition. (1) To the wicked: that they consider their state in God's sight, when they are so spitefully bent against the godly. (2) To the godly: to be both wise as serpents and harmless as doves, and to beware of men. 3. For comfort to the godly, that their adversaries are wicked men, for they may hereon rest assured that God will not join with their enemies unless it be for trial of grace, as in Job, or for the sins of the godly, in forsaking Him,

**II. THE PURPOSE AND ATTEMPT OF DAVID'S ENEMIES AGAINST HIM.** They came upon him to eat up his flesh; that is, utterly to destroy him. 1. Because of his religion and piety, with which their corruption could admit no accord (Ps. xxxviii. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 14; 1 John iii. 12). 2. Because of the honour and dignity whereto God had advanced him (Ps. iv. 2; lxii. 4). **Uses**—1. For instruction. (1) To discover the exceeding measure of corruption that is in natural men, and thereupon their fearful state in soul to Godward (Ps. liii. 1, 3, 4; lxxxiii. 4; Acts xxii. 22). (2) To manifest that there is a special providence of God over His Church and children, that preserves and keeps them, notwithstanding all the spite and rage of the wicked against them (Ps. cv. 12–14). 2. For admonition. (1) To the wicked, to consider of their corrupt affection, in spite and hatred against the godly, whence it comes, that so they may discern their fearful state in soul, and labour to alter it. (2) To the godly, often to bethink themselves what their religion may bring upon them from the wicked; that so they may get the sure shelter from it, viz. to have God for them. **III. THE ISSUE AND SUCCESS OF THE CRUEL ATTEMPT OF DAVID'S ENEMIES AGAINST HIM.** 1. They did not only fail of their purpose against David, but even themselves stumbled and fell. 2. The reason or cause hereof was in God, who for just causes stood for David, and set Himself against David's enemies. (1) He found him out, and chose him to do Him service, in that place and state wherein he was so mightily opposed by his enemies (Ps. lxxxix. 20, 21). (2) David trusted in God, and so was holpen (Ps. lx. 1–3). (3) David prayed unto the Lord, and so was preserved (Ps. lvi. 9; xxxiv. 4). (4) David made conscience of sin, and walked in obedience (Ps. xviii. 21, 24). (5) God would not be with his enemies, because they were not called of God, nor sent by Him against David; they were wicked men, workers of iniquity; they did neither regard God's word nor God's works; they trusted in their own might and outward means. **Uses**—1. For instruction. (1) See what a great blessing and privilege it is to stand rightly in covenant with God; whereby He becometh light or salvation to a man or to a people, and the strength of their life. (2) See the misery of those that be out of covenant with God, for the Lord's power is ever against them. 2. For admonition: to give all diligence to be truly in covenant with God, that so it may be with us as it was with David. 3. For comfort to the godly, fighting the Lord's battles, and yet overmatched. (*T. Pierson.*)

**Ver. 3. My heart shall not fear.**—*A stout heart:*—These are the words of a veteran, not of a raw recruit in the battle of life. A first disaster brings consternation; a ripened experience alone can take calamity calmly. God educates His servants by hard discipline, in conflict with the forces of evil; and He educates the world by calling it to watch the contest. **I. IN THE STRIFE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, THE GOOD SEEMS TO BE FEARFULLY OVERMATCHED.** The host of Midian were as grasshoppers for multitude, but the Israelitish army consisted of three hundred picked men. The Christians in workshops are but a feeble minority. Temples of vice are more crowded and longer open than Christian churches. The Devil's recruits far outnumber those of the Prince of Peace. **II. EVIL EVER APPEARS TO BE HANGING OVER THE HEADS OF THE GODLY.** To take a Christian stand is to expose oneself to ridicule and to danger. The struggle seems to be a hopeless one, both against the evil without and the evil within. Many an earnest Christian is fearful at times, lest the evil within should finally overmaster him. There seem to be times when the spirit of the loto-eaters takes possession of us, and we feel that we must take a rest, and let sin sweep over us. Were it not better to make peace with powerful evils rather than contend longer against them? **III. BUT THE THREAT OF DISASTER IS WORSE THAN THE REALITY.** The Devil's bark is more frequent than his bite. Many a dark cloud passes without bursting with the threatening storm. The darkest hour is often that before the dawn. In any case, to treat a threatening evil as an actual one is to suffer needlessly. The coward dies a thousand deaths before he dies once. Courage! Do not yield to evil because the siege is a strait one. **IV. APPARENT ODDS ARE NO TEST OF ULTIMATE VICTORY.** He who has not lost courage is master of the future. It is not true to say that "God is on the side of the biggest battalions." What of Gideon's three hundred, and the ten thousand Greeks at Marathon? What, too, of the immense hosts of the Spanish Armada? God's greatest victories have been won by the smallest and apparently most feeble forces. **V. THE SUFFERING OF APPARENT DEFEAT IN THE CAUSE OF RIGHT IS BUT**



**SHARING THE BURDEN OF GOD.** The hermit who stopped the gladiatorial contests at the cost of his own life, chose a nobler lot than they did who occupied seats of honour in the amphitheatre; and we all see it now, though few saw it then. We may do more for God's cause by our suffering than we could by our prosperity. "How can man die better?" VI. **THE CALM ENDURANCE OF CALAMITY BRINGS ITS OWN BLESSINGS.** A regiment is of but little use in battle until it has been "shot over." The tried man is the blessed man. By such endurance we bring a nobler ideal nearer to men. And we secure the sympathy of the noblest souls for truth and righteousness. (R. C. Ford, M.A.) *Fortitude*.—Fortitude is opposed to timidity, irresolution, a feeble and wavering spirit. It is placed, like other virtues, between two extremes: at an equal distance from rashness on the one hand, and pusillanimity on the other. I. **THE HIGH IMPORTANCE OF FORTITUDE.** 1. Without some degree of fortitude, there can be no happiness; because, amidst the thousand uncertainties of life, there can be no enjoyment of tranquillity. The man of feeble and timorous spirit lives under perpetual alarms. On the first shock of adversity he desponds. On the other hand, firmness of mind is the parent of tranquillity. It enables one to enjoy the present without disturbance; and to look calmly on dangers that approach, or evils that threaten in future. It suggests good hopes. It supplies resources. It allows a man to retain the full possession of himself, in every situation of fortune. 2. If fortitude be thus essential to the enjoyment of life, it is equally so to the proper discharge of all its most important duties. He who is of a cowardly mind is, and must be, a slave to the world. He fashions his whole conduct according to its hopes and fears. He smiles, and fawns, and betrays, from abject considerations of personal safety. He can neither stand the clamour of the multitude, nor the frowns of the mighty. The wind of popular favour, or the threats of power, are sufficient to shake his most determined purpose. 3. Without this temper of mind, no man can be a thorough Christian. For his profession, as such, requires him to be superior to that fear of man which bringeth a snare; enjoins him, for the sake of a good conscience, to encounter every danger; and to be prepared, if called, even to lay down his life in the cause of religion and truth. II. **THE PROPER FOUNDATIONS OF FORTITUDE.** 1. A good conscience. There can be no true courage, no regular persevering constancy, but what is connected with principle, and founded on a consciousness of rectitude of intention. This, and this only, erects that brazen wall which we can oppose to every hostile attack. It clothes us with an armour, on which fortune will spend its shafts in vain. What has he to fear, who not only acts on a plan which his conscience approves, but who knows that every good man, nay, the whole unbiassed world, if they could trace his intentions, would justify and approve his conduct? 2. He knows, at the same time, that he is acting under the immediate eye and protection of the Almighty. The consciousness of such an illustrious spectator invigorates and animates him. He trusts that the eternal Lover of righteousness not only beholds and approves, but will strengthen and assist; will not suffer him to be unjustly oppressed, and will reward his constancy in the end, with glory, honour, and immortality. III. **CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY PROVE AUXILIARY TO THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUOUS FORTITUDE IN THE MIDST OF DANGERS.** 1. It is of high importance to every one, who wishes to act his part with becoming resolution, to cultivate a religious principle, and to be inspired with trust in God. The more firmly this belief is rooted in the heart, its influence will be more powerful in surmounting the fears which arise from a sense of our own weakness or danger. The records of all nations afford a thousand remarkable instances of the effect of this principle, both on individuals and on bodies of men. Animated by the strong belief of a just cause, and a protecting God, the feeble have waxed strong, and despised dangers, sufferings, death. 2. Let him who would preserve fortitude in difficult situations, fill his mind with a sense of what constitutes the true honour of man. It consists not in the multitude of riches, or the elevation of rank; for experience shows that these may be possessed by the worthless, as well as by the deserving. It consists in being deterred by no danger when duty calls us forth; in fulfilling our allotted part, whatever it may be, with faithfulness, bravery, and constancy of mind. These qualities never fail to stamp distinction on the character. 3. But in order to acquire habits of fortitude, what is of the highest consequence is to have formed a just estimate of the goods and evils of life, and of the value of life itself. For here lies the chief source of our weakness and pusillanimity. We over-value the advantages of fortune; rank and riches, ease and safety. (H. Blair,

*D.D.) Dauntless courage:*—A Dutch fleet once drew near to Chatham. Fearing it might effect a landing, the Duke of Albemarle determined to prevent it, and endeavoured to inspire his men with his own dauntless spirit. Calmly he took his position in the front, thus exposing himself to the hottest fire from the hostile ships. An affectionate but over-cautious friend, seeing him in such danger, darted forward, seized him by the arm, and exclaimed, "Retire, I beseech you, from this fierce shower of bullets, or you will be a dead man!" The Duke, releasing himself from his grasp, turned coldly on the man who would tempt him to cowardice in the hour of his country's need, and replied, "Sir, if I had been afraid of bullets I should have given up the profession of a soldier long ago." (*Quiver.*)

**Ver. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord.**—*Singleness of purpose in worship:*—Worship is a necessity to the spiritually awakened soul. Public worship was an urgent, pressing necessity in the psalmist's case. When, on another occasion similar to that on which he penned this psalm, he found himself deprived of the refreshing and ennobling services of God's house, he exclaimed (Ps. lxxxiv. 2). Our text teaches us much about David as a worshipper. I. **HIS SINGleness OF PURPOSE IN WORSHIP.** 1. No moment in the history of his soul was so full of meaning as that moment when, as though he saw the Invisible, he poured the petitions of his overflowing soul into the ear of Him who listens to the cry of the raven, and also the cries and supplications of His needy people, and supplies their every want. In worship he learnt more, felt better, and understood the purposes of life more thoroughly than in any other act of his life. He placed everything else on a lower plane as of less importance, that he might pray to God, fully persuaded that he could obtain more for his soul and the souls of his fellow-creatures by that means than by any other method. 2. The vehemence of the psalmist's desire would have consumed him had he not been able to embody the desire in the act. Like another servant of God's, the passion to act was like a "burning fire shut up" in his "bones," until he moved to seek after that which he so ardently desired. Religion was a business with him who penned this psalm, not a mere pastime. The more the soul possesses of the spirit of true piety, the more active will it become. 3. David having found the Lord to be to him all he tells us in the first verse, it is only natural that his most earnest spiritual desires should be towards Him. II. **THE PARTICULAR PLACE WHERE HE DESIRED TO WORSHIP.** "O that I might be able to perform all the duties of life in the house of God, beneath His eye, and in His immediate presence; that every act of my life might be an act of worship." He did not, monk-like, desire to spend his life in self-imposed idleness; his active, kingly nature would not permit him to waste precious time in such a selfish luxury; but he desired, above all things, that his life should be supremely spiritual. If all who are engaged in the world's work in the various walks of life were seeking to perform its many duties as though they were conscious that they were in the presence of God, who approves or disapproves of every act done by men, doubtless a much greater number would be actuated by the spirit that breathes in the text. Then every factory, warehouse, exchange, shop, market-place, school-room, and study would be a sacred place, made such by spiritual men and women. Every building may be a house of God if there be a child of God in it. III. **HIS DETERMINATION TO PERSEVERE IN THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD.** "All the days," etc. This is really a spiritual necessity. If the soul is to live and grow in the virtues of religion, its needs must be attended to every day, and as long as life lasts. The bread of life that came down from heaven is the soul's portion, and it is everything we can desire. Then there is the river of life, the streams of which never dry. Let us constantly seek these grand essentials in the worship of God. (*D. Rhys Jenkins.*) *The simplification of life:*—Here is a man whose life has reached its uttermost simplicity, his longings are reduced to one. The whole force of his being is concentrated upon a single aim. "One thing have I desired, that will I seek after." I do not suppose he had been able to say this always; there was a time when, if he spoke his heart, he said, "Many things I desire." All of us have gone through that, some of us are going through it still. The child is possessed by what Wordsworth called "chance desires." Every shop window is crowded with objects of desire; he wants so many of the sweet and pretty things, that it is cruelty to ask him to say which. There is another stage. The same great poet sings, "He became the slave of low desires." Many a man is set

on things which cannot be called base, but they are low; they are natural and pleasant, but there is nothing exalted or exalting about them; if they do not degrade, they do not elevate. Many such things have we desired. We cannot help the fact that we start low, but we sin if we finish there. This man had passed through both these stages of experience. There came a moment when a new desire was borne into his life and leaped like fire upon the other longings there, and caught them up into itself. "One thing have I desired; that will I seek after." And this experience is not so singular as may appear. Life is a process of simplification; the many things that we desire in youth dwindle, or rather coalesce into one dominant desire, just as the many streamlets of the hills all join the river in the vale. Every man down at the core of him desires one thing. The difference between them is in the thing which they desire. This man has told us what it was he had at heart when he exclaimed, "One thing have I desired." It was to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to observe His beauty, and to inquire in His temple. Translated into modern speech that means, "The one thing for which I long above all others is to be true and noble, and like God; I want to be the best that God can make me, I want to attain the highest that is possible for me. That is the passion of my soul for which I live, and pray, and toil each day and all day long." (*James Mursell*.)

**A great desire:—I. THE GREAT OBJECT OF HIS ARDENT DESIRE.** 1. A permanent residence in the house of God. The psalmist desired to engage permanently in the service of the Lord. What a contrast is this to the conduct of those who attend only occasionally when opportunity appears to them to favour it, or when worldly engagements do not interfere. The psalmist had an ardent desire for this object. What a contrast does this present to those who come to the house of the Lord, but who come from improper motives, who are induced to come from submission to authority, from a compliance with custom, or from the accusation of conscience. 2. The object of the psalmist's desire includes the enjoyment of the Divine presence in His ordinances, to behold the beauty of the Lord. The beauty of the Lord is that display of His presence and perfections which is made to the minds of His true and spiritual worshippers. The services of the ancient temple were beautiful. They were typical of Gospel times; yet the ancient saints rejoiced in the glory which was to be revealed. We possess the full revelation of that glory which they "beheld through a glass darkly." In our temple, though no cedars cast around their fragrance, nor are the sunbeams reflected from burnished gold—though we have no priests arrayed in costly vestments, nor do clouds of incense wave around us; yet in the full revelation of the Gospel, and in the more abundant influence of the Spirit, we behold a beauty which far surpasses the beauty of the ancient church. 3. The object of the psalmist's desire includes an obedient, and diligent, and successful study of the Divine will, and to inquire in His temple.

**II. THE ARDENT INTENSITY WITH WHICH THE PSALMIST DESIRED THIS OBJECT.** "One thing have I desired," etc. 1. This is the language of decision. 2. Of decided preference. Elsewhere he says, "I had rather be a doorkeeper," etc. (*Ps. lxxxix.*). I commend his choice to you. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*)

**David's desire:—**"One thing," says the psalmist, "I desire; that will I seek after." Now what do you suppose it was? If you yourselves were about to express, at this moment, the one desire of your hearts—I mean that which was really and sincerely so—what would it be? Many of you would point, I have no doubt, to various things in which happiness is generally regarded as consisting—such a situation, such an income, such family comforts, such temporal enjoyments, and so on. You would, you think, be well content with these. Some few, however, would say that the "one thing" they would desire is to be Christ's. Well, now, read the text fully, and you will see that David is not of your mind who care only for the good things of this world. Consider, then—

**I. THE THING DAVID DESIRED, viz. "to dwell in the house of the Lord," etc.** **II. THE FERVENCY AND SINCERITY OF HIS DESIRE.** "One thing have I desired of the Lord," etc. **III. THE CAUSE OF HIS DESIRE, or the ends for the sake of which he entertains it; viz. "to behold the beauty of the Lord," etc.** (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

**A breathing after God:—**In this psalm we have shown us David's comfort. It was altogether in the Lord, and in his faith that God would destroy his cruel enemies. Hence he had great courage (*ver. 3*). And now in the text we come to his chief care and concern: "One thing have I desired," etc. **I. CONSIDER THIS GENERALLY.** 1. By "one thing" he means that this was the chief and principal thing. There are differences in things, but this includes all. And God requires this supreme

regard from us, for so only will the soul be in earnest, and this which David desired is the chief thing for the soul's good. 2. The affection itself, in its degrees. He desired this "one thing," and he would still "seek after it." Desires are the aims of the heart, and determine its character. This was a spiritual desire, stirred up by the Spirit of God. We may test our being really Christians by our desires. If we be such, then they will be spiritual, fervent, constant, springing from the love of God, tending to His honour, and leading us to diligent use of means, and greater than any earthly desire. 3. Its object. Of the Lord he desired this "one thing." When we have holy desires, turn them into prayers. 4. Its earnestness. "That will I seek after." Prayer must be with importunity. II. PARTICULARLY. 1. "That I may dwell in the house." etc. By this David meant the sanctuary, the type of the Church, the true house of God on earth. For there God is present. Now here David would ever dwell, because so he would dwell in God's love and care; and in love to and for Him; and all this continually. His present attainment in good things does not satisfy him; he yet is hindered by much inward corruption: there is yet far more to be realized, and where God is present all good must be. 2. "To behold the beauty of the Lord." God is beautiful. This seen in His house, for there we see His grace and love in Jesus Christ our Lord. And the house of God is beautiful also because the angels are present there: and because of the order of the Church, and the means of salvation—prayer, the Word, the Sacraments—which are there. And the praises of God are delightful. How evil, then, the condition of those who care not for the house of God. Seek after spiritual senses, whereby you can apprehend this "beauty of the Lord." If as yet you fail to behold it, writ still on the ordinances, come to them in believing prayer: meditate much upon them. To induce us to seek this love for the house of God, let us remember that so only can true glory rest upon us: that our souls were made to behold the glory of God, and that disregard of His ordinances will cause God to depart from us. If we do not prize heavenly things we shall not be allowed to keep them. (R. Sibbes.) *David's paramount desire*:—I. THE OBJECT OF DAVID'S DESIRE WAS to "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life." God's house was, to David, the tabernacle, to Solomon, the temple, to any one, whatever spot is consecrated by God's special presence. A stately pile was never reared for God to dwell in than that which crested the holy height of Moriah, and yet how truly exclaimed the pious monarch in his dedication prayer, "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded?" The lofty soul of Isaiah thus sympathetically responds to this grand organ swell, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me?" (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; lvii. 15). Yet He inhabits also the contrite heart. He whom not even eternity can bound, who, on the contrary, calls eternity in every sense His own, can make a house of the contrite heart as well as of the heaven of heavens. How marvellous the condescension! And yet not so marvellous after all; for the heart of the contrite sinner, even in its wreck and ruin, is a grander thing than the mere place called heaven. An ancient sage grandly observed, "On earth there is nothing great but man; and in man there is nothing great but mind." David found God everywhere, but none the less did he love God's holy hill of Zion. And let the like love for our own sanctuary characterize us. To dwell here is to be in sympathy with all that is here that is spiritual and good. To all this one thing is essential. If we would "dwell in God's house," we must first "dwell in God." To be at home in His house, we must be at home with Himself. We must meet God in peace and love over the Great Sacrifice. The prodigal must return; the enemy must be reconciled. Then, like holy men of old, you will feel, "It is good for us to be here"—good to linger where Christ is, and where heaven and earth, Old Testament and New, conspire to give Him glory. II. ITS CHARACTER. This desire of David was intense: "One thing," says he, "have I desired." Oh how impressive these "one things" of the Bible! Martha was cumbered about many things, but "one thing was needful." The rich young moralist had much, but "one thing he lacked." Paul had scope and faculty for varied action, but, as if gathering himself up into a thunderbolt, he said, "One thing I do." And such a desire could not stop short of being also a practical desire: what he desired as a "one thing," and desired "of the Lord," that, we are prepared to hear him add, "will I seek after." For our particular sanctuary many a desire has gone forth, many a

prayer, many an effort. Then, all the more continue to pray and strive, and strive and pray, "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" in it. III. ITS END—"to behold the beauty," etc.—to see, and to go on inquiring that he might yet further see, the beauty of the Lord—His moral glory, which rays forth in brightest splendour from the face of Jesus Christ. Whoever you are, whatever you need, behold the love of God, His beauty, in Christ, and come unto Him and live. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Concentration*.—An anonymous writer has left us a very discriminating comparison of two great British statesmen. He likens Canning's mind to a convex speculum, which scattered its rays of light upon all objects; while he likens Brougham's to a concave speculum, which concentrated the rays upon one central, burning, focal point. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *Unity of purpose*.—Clio will have no divided worship. Gibbon did nothing else than devote himself heart and soul to the *Decline and Fall*. When Grote undertook the *History of Greece*, he had to give up his business. Macaulay, when he began the *History of England*, had to drop writing articles for the *Edinburgh Review*. (*Peter Anton.*) *Life's limitations*.—In a garden at Mentone is a tree upon which may be seen at the same time oranges, lemons, citrons, and shaddockes. All the grafts were alive, but they were not all equally vigorous. If I remember well, there was but one fruit of each kind on any but the orange and the lemon, and the orange greatly preponderated in fruitfulness. The stronger wins the day. The more vigorous of the grafts took the sap to itself, and left the others to pine. One kind of fruit is enough for one tree, and one great object is enough for one man. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The good man's desires after the house of God*.—I. **WHAT THE DESIRE OF THE PSALMIST, AND SO OF EVERY SAINT, IS FIXED UPON.** It is as if he should say, "As long as I live I would gladly live in the house of God, be always near to Him, have uninterrupted communion with Him, be employed in hearing from Him, praying to Him, praising of Him; and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is found in such works and enjoyments as these. I am nowhere so well as in the house of God: no company like His; no entertainment like His. Here I would be, not as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night, but as one that belongs to the family, a stated inhabitant. I desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, and this not for a short and limited time, but all the days of my life: as long as I remain upon earth, the house of God will be my most delightful abode." II. **THE DESIRE ITSELF.** 1. Take notice of its characters. It is a real desire, not feigned. Fixed. "One thing." Supreme; he desired it before and above all else. With this he was content, without it nothing could satisfy him (Ps. xlii. 1, 2; lxxxiv. 2). Constant and abiding—he has desired it, and still he "will seek after" it. And it is influential upon his practice. It makes him pray and endeavour. 2. Whence it springs. It is from God's Spirit. We did not bring it into the world ourselves, and we could not produce it ourselves. III. **THE AIM HE PROFFESSES TO HAVE.** "To behold the beauty," etc.—God in Christ—"and to inquire," etc. Let us be thankful for "the house of the Lord." (*D. Wilcox.*) *Dwelling in the house of the Lord*.—I. **THE DESIRE OF THE PSALMIST,** "To dwell in the house of the Lord." His desire was—1. Paramount. It was the "one thing" above all others. 2. Operative. "Seek after." He strove to attain the permanent position, overriding all difficulties. 3. Uniform. 4. Permanent. "All the days of my life." II. **THE DESIGN OF THE PSALMIST.** Why did he want to "dwell in the house of the Lord"? 1. To admire. "To behold the beauty of the Lord." Admiration is one of the chief elements of human happiness. Hence the universe overflows with beauty. 2. To think. "To inquire in the temple." He did not desecrate merely an empty gaze, or a luxuriating in admiration, but to think also. (*The Homilist.*) *The house of God* (I.).—The learned tell us that this psalm is made up of two independent poems, the second of which begins at the seventh verse. And certainly the great difference of thought and feeling between the two parts goes far to justify the suggestion. But is not the first half also the work of two writers? Can the speaker of the first three verses be the same as the speaker of the next three? At the fourth verse the sentiment and atmosphere undergo an entire change. Before that you have represented the active, after it the contemplative life. The temperament of the earlier speaker is practical, of the later æsthetic. In the former part you are stirred by "the trumpet's loud clangour" and the defiant tones of the warrior; in the latter you are subdued to the awe and serenity of the mystic. The two types thus represented are, indeed, common. We know them both well. The

strenuous, hustling man of affairs, who can't bear to be inactive, and loves the bustle of modern life. And that other we also know, "his brow sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"; of intellectual or æsthetic bent; who is never so happy as when alone "far from the madding crowd," surrounded by his books and his pictures. And God made them both and appointed to each his part. And both find their strength and delight in Him, who is at once God of might and of wisdom, Lord of battles, and Prince of peace. What causes the surprise is that these contradictory, if complementary, temperaments are represented as being united in one and the same person. Here is the active man who loves contemplation! The warrior in the high places of the battlefield, who sighs for the solemn hush of the sanctuary! The public man who longs for the heritage of the recluse! How are we to regard such a phenomenon? Have we here a melancholy illustration of life's misfits? Is this a case of a man who has missed his calling, who, as the proverb says, is "a square peg in a round hole"? There are such cases. Men intended by nature for a contemplative life who have been forced by circumstances into the active. But the true explanation is not, I think, in that direction. The speech of a mystic, turned warrior against his will, would bewray him in his utterance of the warrior's defiance. But this challenge is beyond suspicion. It is quite evidently characteristic and sincere. This man is not seeking a way of escape from his present duties; he has no wish to obtain release from the strain upon him. On the contrary, he rather enjoys the fray. He is glad of the occasion that keeps all his powers at full stretch, and taxes his strength to the uttermost, and adds the excitement of risk and peril. He "rejoices as a strong man to run a race." But he recognizes the obvious fact that the more constant and exacting the demand upon a man's powers the greater need of time for recuperation; the more one draws on the reserves the greater the necessity of proper provision for their replenishing. On the other hand, one may use the surface water without stint, if one is sure that the deep springs are being fed. Now in the words of the text, this Samson is confessing where his great strength lies. The light by which he makes his midnight marches, the strength in which he wrestles, the confidence that nerves his arm, and braces him to engage in a fight against fearful odds and, with an exultation that has almost a boyish swagger about it, to "sing defiance to the gates of hell," comes from his God. And it is in the vision of God, and the sense of communion with Him, which he realizes in the sanctuary that he receives the retrieving and replenishing grace which "soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear." This surely is the true connection of the two parts of the psalm. The active and the contemplative lives are not so much antagonistic as complementary. The high pitch of perfection which is now expected in front rank men makes specialization a necessity, and so tends to the separation of the two. But nature is wont to wreak vengeance on such as lose sight of her great law of balance. To keep up the pace, the active, pushing man of affairs must have his period of reflection. He needs an opportunity for self-refreshment, a vantage ground from which to view the direction of his energies, and what the psalmist here avers, uttering it with the deep feeling of strong conviction and happy experience, is this: that for real change and for all recuperative purposes of body, mind, and spirit, there is no place like the house of God. Wiser than many busy men of to-day, he sees that the strenuousness of life, so far from justifying indifference to worship and absence from the house of God, constitutes the strongest argument for regular and eager attendance. In order to meet the supposed demand of exhausted nature, modern society has instituted the custom of week-ending. London, they say, is empty on the Sunday! A similar exodus takes place from the great cities of the provinces. The bustle of the town has invaded the country! Where is the rest and quiet the travellers sought? A change of air and scene without a doubt has its value. But change of sky unaccompanied by change of thoughts is only partially restorative. "The mind is its own place!" Again, we need a period of relief from the busy round of daily duties in order to gain a better view of the trend of our life. One wants a vantage ground where one can see the whole. The general must not get entangled in his fighting line. The artist steps back from his easel in order that he may see if the effect he is producing is that which he really intends. The business man needs to stop buying and selling, and to take stock, so as to see what department is remunerative and what is being run at a loss. Now it is just these needs which the psalmist says the house of God supplies. It affords that

detached point of view from which the whole of life may be surveyed. Inquiry in the Lord's temple obtains the answer to many a riddle for the lack of which men live in the weakness of indecision, or receives a grace and assurance even better than the difficulty's solution. Again, is there any place in which you are so quickly conscious of a change of atmosphere affecting the whole being as the house of God affords? Just as the Embassy of another nation is considered a portion of the territory of that nation, so the house of God is a little bit of the Eternal world let down into the world of time. Pass within its doors. You have, as it were, entered the territory of another State. Here reigns another Monarch, a different language is spoken, other laws obtain, different sanctions hold sway, than those recognized by the world outside. The house of God stands for and witnesses to other thoughts and other feelings than those of the market-place, the battlefield, the law court, and the university. It is tenanted by a different spirit. It introduces to a life loftier and deeper, richer and fuller, more strenuous and more peaceful, more joyful and more sympathetic, more self-denying and more self-abandoning, than any of which the world has dreamed. From its beauteous worship a man goes forth at once softened and exhilarated, subdued and strengthened. On another occasion we must consider how this great purpose is accomplished. (*F. L. Wiseman.*) *The house of God* (II.):—The particular aspect of the subject I am striving to present is the peculiar utility and profit of the house of God to the men and women of a busy age like the present. The psalmist, engrossed in the pressing cares and duties of a strenuous life, realizes his need for a period of relaxation and a place in which his exhausted powers may be recuperated, and the deep wells of his nature replenished. In the house of the Lord, as he states, he finds just the answer to his need. 1. The very name of the place seems to indicate as much. It is "the house of the Lord." The place where God is to be found and known. Not, of course, that that is the only place in which he is to be met with. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how much less the house that is built with hands? As our Lord has taught us, wherever there is one who would worship in spirit and truth, God is near. 'None the less, however, the house built for His glory, and dedicated to His honour, is His peculiar habitation in this sense, that it is there that man recognizes Him. Attendance on the house of God is the acknowledgment of God, the living God, in His infinite and glorious perfections, and in the righteousness and beneficence of His rule. Here man recognizes in his own heart, and before his fellows, the being and the presence of the everlasting, ever-present, all-holy, all-wise, all-loving God. And the more the set of the stream with or against which his daily life flows has been away from God, the greater the need and the boon of just such a reflection. Further, in the house of God man sees God in a right light: sees Him as He wishes to be known. As the psalmist reminds us, God's revelation of Himself to man is conditioned by the state of mind and heart of the person to whom the revelation is made. It may, therefore, assume an aspect in which He Himself has no pleasure. To the pure He shows Himself pure; but to the perverse He appears as froward. The view of the character of God which a sinful and rebellious age obtains needs therefore correcting and supplementing. But in the place where men come to seek His face, in His temple in which they inquire after Him, He can and does appear as He would be known, in His "beauty," as the text says. Here, alongside His unimpeachable righteousness, He proclaims His name as gracious and merciful, slow to anger, plenteous in kindness. 2. The text further suggests another alluring and uplifting aspect of God's house, to which both other Old Testament Scripture and the Lord Jesus Himself give utterance. His house is called a house of prayer. He who goes to the house of God goes to the place where prayer is wont to be made. In other words, he there learns the nature, not only of God, but of himself also. Prayer is an acknowledgment of God's supremacy and of man's dependence. Is there any climate so grateful, so restoring, so bracing as the atmosphere of prayer? On every side one hears complaints of the hardening influence of modern commercial life. Keen competition leads to self-assertion, callousness, and indifference to the interests of others. The successful man is apt to become self-sufficient, inconsiderate, arrogant; the unsuccessful, bitter, cold, sardonical; and all more or less reserved and unreal. To some, therefore, it is an excellent discipline surely to come to the place where one's very presence acknowledges dependence and confesses how little our native power avails. To others it affords an exercise of trust to bow before the will of God. And to all it must be an unspeakable relief

to come where one can be exactly oneself: where all the traditions and influence gathering around the place conspire to say, "Ye people, pour out your hearts before Him; God is a refuge for us." 3. But there is yet another and still more intimate term by which the house is known. It needed a child to discover it, and that child the Holy Child. When the anxious mother chid her wondrous Son that He had caused her three days' sorrowful search, He gently and brightly replied, "But how is it you went about looking for Me; did it not occur to you that I should certainly be in my Father's house?" My Father's house—that is Jesus' name for the house of God. Verily He makes all things new! The house of God is the place to which the Child would naturally go! It is home! The Father's house! Is there any place so beautiful, so restful, so welcome? Here one may enjoy the most delightful of all fellowship, the fellowship with the members of one's own family; and fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The cleansing, soothing, refreshing, renewing, strengthening, enwisening, sanctifying influence of such a place and such a fellowship who can compute? No wonder that the psalmist, who had enjoyed it, longed to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, or bewailed that fate had made him a dweller in the tents of Kedar or in the high places of danger and strife. But note the great discovery he makes. He finds that, though now he has returned from the house of God, he has not left it! The house of God has followed him, and in some mysterious way is still his habitation and shelter. The time of worldly trouble and danger acquaints him with the fact. In the time of trouble he is hid in the secret of his Father's pavilion, and on the battlefield screened in the covert of the tabernacle! It is the perpetual miracle of the Father's providence. He who loves the house of God, and goes to it as he has opportunity, will dwell under its influence all the days of his life. (*Ibid.*) *God seen and man taught in the temple*.—Note—I. THE "ONE THING" OF THE PSALMIST'S DESIRE—"that I may dwell," etc. II. THE OBJECT FOR WHICH HE CHERISHED THIS STRONG DESIRE. 1. That he might behold the beauty of the Lord—the outward beauty animated with the service of the Lord: that which we should desire to see is the spiritual beauty, the various perfections of His character. 2. That he might inquire in His temple. David needed to inquire of God as a king; also as a man; as a transgressor. And how many are the subjects on which we shall do well to inquire of God in His temple? (*John Corbin.*) *Guests of God*.—I. THE TRUE MEANING OF THE ASPIRATION. What the psalmist desires is that he may be able to keep up unbroken consciousness of being in God's presence, and may be always in touch with Him. He had learned what so many of us need to learn far more thoroughly, that if our religion does not drive the wheels of our daily business, it is of little use; and that if the field in which our religion has power to control and impel is not that of the trivialities and secularities of our ordinary life, there is no field for it at all. II. THE PSALMIST'S REASON FOR THIS ASPIRATION. "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord." That is an allusion, not only, as I think, to the temple, but also to the oriental habit of giving a man who took refuge in the tent of the sheikh guest-rites of protection, and provision, and friendship. So the psalmist says, "I desire to have guest-rites in thy tent; to lift up its fold, and shelter there from the heat of the desert. And although I be dark and stained with many evils and transgressions against thee, yet I come to claim the hospitality, and provision, and protection, and friendship which the laws of the house do bestow upon a guest." That is to say, the blessedness of keeping up such a continual consciousness of touch with God is, first and foremost, the certainty of infallible protection. Oh! how it minimizes all trouble and brightens all joys, and calms amidst all distractions, and steadies and sobers in all circumstances, to feel ever the hand of God upon us! There is another blessing that will come to the dweller in God's house, and not a small one. It is that by the power of this one satisfied longing, driven like an iron rod through all the tortuosities of my life, there will come into it a unity which otherwise few lives are ever able to attain, and the want of which is no small cause of the misery that is great upon men. Most of us seem, to our own consciousness, to live amidst endless distractions all our days. III. THE METHOD BY WHICH THIS DESIRE IS REALIZED. "One thing have I desired, . . . that will I seek after." There are two points to be kept in view to that end. A great many people say, "One thing have I desired," and fail in persistent continuousness of the desire. No man gets rights of residence in God's house for a longer time than he continues to seek for them. But the words of the text not only



suggest by the two tenses of the verbs the continuity of the desire which is destined to be granted, but also by the two verbs themselves—desire and seek after—the necessity of uniting prayer and work. Many desires are unsatisfied because conduct does not correspond to desires. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *David's delight in the house of God*.—I. DAVID'S DESIRE. To "dwell in the house of the Lord," or to regularly attend the same, is very desirable—1. Because of God Himself being there (Matt. xviii. 20). No wonder that any one who is "spiritually minded" should wish to be continually present with Christ. 2. Because of the blessings to be obtained there. (1) Light, i. e. knowledge, holiness, joy. (2) Salvation. (3) Consolation. (4) Strength. II. DAVID'S DESIGN. III. DAVID'S DETERMINATION. "That will I seek after." This supposes obstacles or hindrances. Various and many are the hindrances to public worship. Some, I fear, absent themselves because they are niggardly; but, I believe, others stay away often because they are poor, and cannot give as they would like to. Some are kept away by domestic engagements, the opposition of relatives, sickness, or young children; or, on week-days, by business. Satan seeks to hinder, and some neglect because of indifference. Let no one watch for excuses, but all look out for opportunities, seize them promptly, and use them earnestly; and thus, in spite of all drawbacks, like David, "seek after" the worship of God. (S. Stubbings.) *Dwelling in the house of the Lord*.—This is the singular disclosure, the private feeling of a great man full of power: but Scripture teaches us in this way, not only by laws but by lives as well; and while its rules speak very clearly, its examples are more forcible still. The grace of the Holy Spirit offers us to-day to ascertain from David the inclination Christians ought to have for the services of the Church. Every one of us has a bias, an habitual motive, a master impulse, which, as other influences weaken, makes itself felt. To know what this is, is to know the key to the character, and the clue to the conduct. David's impulse is a good one: he tells us his secret: it is an inclination to religion—the best bias in the world. He did not want, like some, to have the wings of a dove, and fly into the holy sanctuary, away from the duties of life which lay before him, and to choose some new set of duties for himself. His part was given him by the will of God: it was to serve his generation in active life. To have left this for the pleasures of uninterrupted religious worship would have been to abandon duty for inclination. The services of the Church are not the only duty of Christians in the world; but they are the one duty which prepares us to do our other duties well. David's wish was, that he might feel so much interest in religion, and have such an assurance of God's presence in the Church, as always to take pleasure in going there, always to profit while he was there, and always to bring so much good away with him that, though his body might be absent from the temple, his heart might still remain in it, and the memory of its services might be his spiritual food. We are convinced by experience that the necessary business of life tends to drive religion out of our heads, even if it does not drive it out of our hearts. We are quite annoyed when we find ourselves out, and can see how some little matters of only passing interest have made us quite forget for a time the presence of God. We do not wish to be ungrateful or worldly. This will not do, we think. We must try again to be more spiritual. This will grow by practice (1 Cor. xv. 46). There is comfort in this, that by trying we shall be improved, and that it is by gradual and imperceptible training we hope some day to be able to say with all our hearts, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may remember my Church constantly, and live in the presence of God." It is a good beginning to have a clear object in view: "One thing have I desired." And it is better still, after having clearly fixed on one's object, to steadily pursue it: "that will I seek after." If we walk uprightly, and speak uprightly; if we despise the gain of oppression, and shut our eyes from seeing evil; then thy heart shall crave for the rest of the blessed, thy mind shall company with the saints in glory, thy loving ear shall catch the echoes of their song, and (Isa. xxxiii. 17). This was the final object of David's desire: this the end of his search. This was why he would inquire and dwell in the temple, that there, in heaven's rest, in all the days of heaven's life, he might behold the beauty of the Lord. (T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.) *A soul longing for God*.—The character of this psalm is akin to that of the twenty-third in its language, ideas, and devotional spirit. I. THE SOUL'S RESOLVE. What is life without aim, without purpose? It is a moral waste. The true soul will ever have its resolve, its mark, its aim. 1. It is single—"one thing." In

a multiplicity of aims men fail. 2. It is earnest. That will I "seek" after. The earnest man is the real man. II. *THE SOUL'S DESIRE.* This prompted the resolve, and moved the soul to action. It was for—1. The enjoyment of the sanctuary. "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord." To souls depressed, what may not the house of God be to them—a Bethel, a "burning bush" where they may hear God's voice. 2. That this enjoyment may be life long—"All the days of my life." His soul found such delight in those services, and he would have this perpetuated. III. *THE SOUL'S PURPOSE.* 1. To behold the Divine glory—"the beauty of the Lord." 2. To drink at the Divine fountain—"to inquire in His temple." God is the eternal Fountain of Truth and Goodness. (*J. W. Kaye.*) *The influence of religious institutions:*—I. The influence of religious institutions upon men, with respect to their *RELIGIOUS CAPACITY.* True piety indeed is not confined to the sanctuary. High is the pleasure, and great the benefit, of private devotion. But sure I am, that they who have entered into the spirit, and tasted the pleasures, of devotion in secret, will not be thereby prevented from approaching to God in the ordinances of public worship. Society heightens every feeling, improves every delight. All that charms eye, ear, imagination, or heart, is attended with double pleasure, when we share it in the company of others. A holy emulation will rise in the bosoms of the faithful: the ardour will spread from breast to breast, and the passions of one inflame the passions of all. II. The effect of religious institutions upon men, with regard to their *MORAL CHARACTER.* Men in general have no principle of moral conduct but religion, and if that were taken away, they would work all impurity with greediness, whenever they could withdraw from the public eye. Human laws would often be of little avail, without a sense of Divine legislation; and the sanctions of men have little force, unless they were enforced by the authority of God. Mutual confidence between man and man would be destroyed; human life would be thrown into confusion, the safety of mankind would be endangered, and the moral world totter to its ruin, if such a pillar were to fall. And what is it that maintains and spreads religious principles in the world? What is it that keeps alive on the minds of the people, the fear of God and the belief of His providence? It is the public institutions of religion; the observance of the Lord's day; our assembling together for divine worship. III. The effect of religious institutions upon men, with regard to their *POLITICAL STATE.* The political systems that take place in the world, the facility with which the many are governed by the few, is one of the most wonderful things in the history of man. What prevents bloodshed and devastation, and all the evils of war? Nothing so much as the influence of religious principles upon the minds of men. Christianity gives honour to civil government, as being the ordinance of God, and enjoins subjection to the laws, under its own awful sanctions. And not only by particular precepts, but by its secret and less visible influence, it prepares the minds of men for submission to lawful authority. Obedience to spiritual authority paves the way for subjection to the civil power. Hence wise legislators have, even on this account, favoured the progress of religion. IV. The influence of religious institutions upon men, with respect to *DOMESTIC LIFE.* A new bond will be added to the conjugal union, when those whom it connects walk to the house of God in company, take sweet counsel with one another, and set out jointly in the way that leads to life. Watered by the dews of Heaven, which fall here, the olive-plants will flourish round your table. There is a beauty, also, when rich and poor, high and low, who seldom meet together on other occasions, assemble in one place, one great family, in the presence of their common Lord, when they are stripped of every adventitious circumstance, and where virtue makes the only distinction among them. It is the image of those golden times when society began; it is the image of the state which is to come, when God shall be all in all. (*John Logan.*) *The affection of David towards the place of God's worship:*—I. *DAVID'S HEART WAS SET UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD ABOVE ALL OTHER THINGS.* He was moved thereto by the wonderful, rare, heavenly blessings which are enjoyed there, and nowhere else. 1. Here God gives direction in every good way (Ps. xxxii. 8). 2. Here is plentiful provision both for soul and body (Ps. xxxiv. 10; xxxvii. 3, 4). 3. Here is safe protection and preservation, by special providence (Ps. xci. 1; Matt. x. 29-31). 4. Here is most admirable remuneration, even in this life, with the honour of grace, and favour to be His friends (John xv. 14, 15), and His children (1 John iii. 1), and to have the attendance of the angels (Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 11); but most abundantly in the life to come. Uses—1. For

instruction. (1) See here a plain evidence of the great ignorance and unbelief of natural men in the things of God. Not one in a thousand has David's affection to God's house. (2) Undoubtedly it is a wonderful privilege and prerogative to be a true member of God's Church and to live in His house. 2. For admonition. (1) To try our affection towards the house of God, by David's. (2) To get David's affection to God's house; which will be had by knowing their misery that are out of it. II. THE MEANS HE USED, AND THE COURSE HE TOOK, TO OBTAIN THIS BLESSING. David did with prayer join other endeavour to get this blessing. The reason of this behaviour is twofold. 1. Obedience to God's ordinance, who required of those who would dwell in His house three things. (1) Repentance from dead works. (2) To be beautified in soul with inward graces, through regeneration, as faith, virtue, godliness, etc. (3) To be adorned in life with new obedience (Ps. xv. 2, 3; xxiv. 3, 4). 2. Desire to enjoy the blessings of God's house, wherein he knew that man's true happiness did stand (Ps. lxxv. 4; lxxxiv. 4). III. THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR WHICH HE DESIRES TO DWELL THEREIN. All the days of his life. 1. For the fruition of the good things of God's house. 2. For his better opportunity to glorify God (Ps. lxxiii. 4; cxlvi. 2). 8. He knew that to be out of God's house was to be out of God's favour (Gen. iv. 14; 2 Kings xvii. 18, 20). Uses—1. For instruction. See plainly in David that the hearts of the godly do sincerely desire and faithfully strive for perseverance in the state of grace which at this day is dwelling in God's house. 2. For admonition to those that are weary of God's house, and the exercise of religion. IV. THE BLESSED ENDS FOR WHICH DAVID DESIRES THIS. 1. To behold the beauty of the Lord. As in the works of creation He showed the eternal power and wisdom of the Godhead, so in the ordinances of His service He makes known His justice, goodness, love, and mercy in Jesus Christ. 2. That he may inquire in His temple; i. e. diligently seek direction of God in all cases of doubt or difficulty. Reasons hereof—(1) God's own ordinance, directing His people to this duty (Ex. xxv. 21, 22; 1 Kings vi. 19; Num. xxvii. 21; Deut. xvii. 8, 9). (2) For the fruition of the benefits and comforts of this privilege. Freedom from many evils that accompany men's miscarriages who walk in their own counsels (Josh. ix. 14, etc.). Assurance to be acceptable to God, and blessed of Him in the things they take in hand, even of this world (2 Chron. xv. 2, 15). Undoubted fruition of glory in the life to come (Ps. lxxiii. 24). Uses—1. For instruction. See plainly that the true members of God's Church are advanced in privilege, dignity and honour above all other people. 2. For admonition. It serves effectually to move all who live in the Church to look unto their state and carriage, that it be such as may give them some good assurance that they have right to this privilege. Let us see—(1) That we be in covenant with God, else we have no right to this prerogative. (2) That we keep covenant, living in conscionable obedience. (*T. Pierson.*) *Delight in the sanctuary*:—David in the midst of a turbulent life finds refuge from the storm in the harbour of God's sanctuary. I. THE REALIZED FACT THAT HE WHO INHABITS ETERNITY CONDESCENDS TO DWELL IN EARTHLY SANCTUARIES DEDICATED TO HIS WORSHIP. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion." His presence makes it morally beautiful. He is the light and glory of it. Without Him the most gorgeous temple becomes a tomb. II. DELIGHT BECAUSE OF ITS AUGUST AND INSPIRING SERVICES. The praise and prayer—the unfolding of the Word of God, and the illumination coming from the effluence of the Holy Spirit. III. THE DELIGHTFUL REPOSE OF THE PASSIONS, AND REFRESHING OF THE AFFECTIONS, AND QUICKENING OF THE LIFE BY THE VISION OF THOSE HARMONIES THAT MEET IN GOD—His nature, works and ways, and which constitute the "beauty of the Lord." (*Homiletic Review.*) *David's master-passion*:—The first word suggests an important thought—Singleness of aim. Men of one idea—specialists. One man weighs so little *versus* the community, the State, the race, that his whole force and influence are needed in one place to accomplish anything. The rifle-ball has greater penetrating power than shot, not simply because it is larger, but because the force of powder is concentrated on the one projectile. So the men who have penetrated society with their ideas and made a lasting impression. David illustrates this law. He had—I. A MASTER-PASSION. He was a shepherd boy, yet could say, "One thing," etc. A soldier, renowned; a ruler, with great power; a poet, with great celebrity; a father, full of affection; amid all the changes of his varied fortune, "one thing" was the master-passion of his life. II. ITS OBJECT. 1. "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord," etc. Habitual church-going and fellowship with God: "Blessed is the man whom Thou

choosost" (Ps. lxxv. 4). 2. "To behold the beauty of the Lord." Sanctuary, a place for the manifestation of God and for the education of the soul. David wished to appreciate the beauty of the divine character. This required a development of his capacity, a spiritualizing of all his faculties. "God is a Spirit": spiritual things are spiritually discussed. David wished an intimate knowledge of God. Men travel thousands of miles to look upon the beauties of ancient art. These must fade. The "beauty of the Lord" is eternal. 3. "To inquire in His temple." David came to God's house as a learner, an inquirer, sincerely desiring to appropriate to his own heart and life the spirit and excellence, the beauty and worth of Him who condescended to dwell with men and be their God. III. THE RESULT. 1. A literary immortality. 2. The divine approval. "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart." Earth affords no such commendation, no such sweet and lasting reward. For this divine approval brought—3. Present security (Ps. xxvii. 5), and eternal well-being (Ps. xxiii. 6). Make David's master-passion your own. (*J. C. Allen.*) *Moral effects of communion with God:*—Prayer is conversing with God. We converse with men, and then we use familiar language, because they are our fellows. We converse with God, and then we use the lowliest, awfulest, calmest language we can, because He is God. Our intercourse with our fellow-men goes on not by sight, but by sound; not by eyes, but by ears. Hearing is the social sense, and language is the social bond. Prayers and praises are the mode of the Christian's intercourse with the next world, and they have an especial influence upon our fitness for claiming it. He who does not use a gift loses it, and he who neglects to pray is but in a way to lose possession of his divine citizenship. He who has not accustomed himself to the language of heaven will be no fit inhabitant of it when, in the Last Day, it is perceptibly revealed. For prayer has a natural effect in spiritualizing and elevating the soul. And it gives fixedness of mind and of will; and clear perception of duty, and fellowship with the Lord. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) **To behold the beauty of the Lord.**—*The secret of beauty:*—In the New Testament the word "beauty" or "beautiful" is only used once in its literal sense. As in "the gate Beautiful." But the Old Testament has it frequently, and applies it to things, qualities, actions, persons. This one of the differences between the Old Testament and the New, the one teaching the benefits of religion in regard to time, the other in regard to eternity. Hence the Old Testament seeks to bring men into harmony with natural laws; the New, with those which are spiritual. In the one we have truth represented through the senses, but in the other truth is taught in a more spiritual way. There are many scriptures in the Old Testament which speak of beauty, as in text. Reference may be designed to the beauty and splendour of the ritual service of Israel, but the more instructed people rose up from the lower forms of beauty to those higher ones which the house symbolized. Men's first ideas of beauty are physical, and in such beauty there is real pleasure, for which those who possess it may well give God thanks. But the idea of beauty means much more when it is applied to moral qualities. Of these, the earliest which was thought beautiful was courage, the power to do and endure. Then men went on to admire self-sacrifice. The man who would die the most dreadful death rather than desert his post. Or the helmsman who would not quit the wheel-house of his steamboat though she was in flames. Then, a mother's love has always been counted beautiful. Hence all artists have been fond of painting Madonnas. And the love of lovers, because it is the commingling of two hearts. Then the love of the philanthropist. What a halo surrounds the name of Florence Nightingale! And of such men as Kossuth! But to perceive spiritual beauty we must possess it. One of the evidences of Inspiration is its admiration of Moral Beauty, the high praise the Bible gives to goodness. But all such beauty must be real, not pretence, and, when so, it is like music. Melody is beautiful, but harmonies are yet more so. But musical taste is needed to appreciate them. Some prefer a simple ballad to all the glories of Handel or Mozart. No beauty is to be despised, and if the higher be present it will impart some of the lower. The good come to work good. All, therefore, may be beautiful through the possession of moral goodness, and the beauty of moral conduct. You often see this in old and faithful servants. An old negro servant of my father's was a great saint as well as a most lovable man. To me he was always radiant as an angel. He was not black—to me he was as white as the clouds. And there are many such. On the other hand, a man may be in all his surroundings—house, furniture, etc.—

adorned after the manner of a palace, but if he be mean, selfish, sensual, all external beauty will not avail. Let no one mourn that they have not such things. If we could be pictured as we are, what different portraiture there would be! Then love moral beauty everywhere, and despise that which is sensual. Let text be our prayer. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The influence of prayer upon character.*—I. **PRAYERFUL HABITS TEND TO CULTIVATE A FORM OF SUSTAINED THOUGHT.** True prayer engages the understanding in its most vigorous efforts, and always in a definite direction—that of God. Prayer, if not a supreme intellectual effort, certainly exercises our highest faculties. As an educational discipline it is very apparent in godly men who have had no scholarly training. They have a power of fixing their attention and of thoughtfully considering a matter in all its bearings, which is of the utmost value to win conclusions. II. **THEY GIVE DECISION OF CHARACTER.** Prayer brings the soul into the holy calm of that presence where they are no longer carried to and fro by every passing wind of opinion. In His presence we are enabled to feel, and that with power, that to our own Master we stand or fall. A man can hardly be habitually prayerful and yet be changeable and unreliable. For in God's presence we are lifted into a region where the passions and conflicts of this world cannot enter, and where all seem to say to the agitated soul, "Peace, be still." There have been times when a tumultuous crowd, rushing into a venerable church, where a single priest was saying the sacred office, or where a little company of kneeling worshippers bore witness to other and higher interests than those which stirred the passions of the hour—has been awed, arrested, and turned back from its sacrilegious purpose. The sound of the bell summoning to the accustomed evening prayer has been found sufficient to calm passionate excitement, because of the obedience to the summons it secured, and the consequent soothing influence which was obtained through drawing near to God. III. **PRAYER HAS VERY BLESSED SOCIAL EFFECTS.** For it "gilds social intercourse and conduct with a tenderness, an unobtrusiveness, a sincerity, a frankness, an evenness of temper, a cheerfulness, a collectedness, a constant consideration for others, united to a simple loyalty to truth and duty, which leavens and strengthens society." IV. **IN ALL SPIRITUAL WORK OUR EFFICIENCY MAY BE MEASURED BY OUR PRAYERFULNESS.** A great deal of the religious teaching of the day is coldly intellectual, and therefore powerless, because it has not been nourished and quickened at the bosom of prayer. But we must not, we cannot, maintain the habit of prayer simply because of these subjective benefits upon our souls. If we do not believe that God answers prayer we shall soon cease to pray. (*E. W. Shalders, B.A.*) *Saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord.*—I. **IN WHAT THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD CONSISTS.** We call nothing beautiful but what is pleasing; and we call nothing pleasing in a moral agent, but what is morally excellent, or truly virtuous. The beauty of the Lord, therefore, must signify that, in His moral character, which is pleasing to a virtuous and benevolent heart. His beauty is the beauty of holiness. God is love; which constitutes His supreme beauty, and comprises all that is virtuous and morally excellent in His nature. Pure, disinterested, universal benevolence, forms the most beautiful and amiable character conceivable. II. **GOOD MEN ARE CAPABLE OF SEEING THIS MORAL BEAUTY OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.** Those who love God have the same kind of love that God has and exercises towards them and all holy creatures. They see God as He sees Himself, glorious in holiness, and of consequence, glorious in all His other attributes, which are under the influence of His perfectly benevolent heart. They see supreme beauty and excellence in His power and wisdom, in His justice and sovereignty, in His mercy and grace, as they are continually exercised for the highest good of the universe. III. **WHY GOOD MEN DESIRE TO SEE THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.** 1. Because the goodness of God, which forms His supreme excellence, spreads a glory over all the other perfections of His nature. Saints as well as others can see no excellence in the greatness and majesty of God, separately from His perfect holiness and benevolence. 2. Because it spreads a beauty over His works, as well as character. 3. Because it spreads a beauty over all His conduct. 4. Because it spreads a light and beauty over His Word. It enables those who are holy as God is holy, just as God is just, and good as God is good, to see why He commands all men to love Him supremely. Conclusion—1. If it be true that the supreme beauty or glory of God consists in His pure and universal goodness, then sinners hate God for that for which alone they ought to love Him supremely. 2. If saints sincerely and ardently desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, then

they are essentially different from sinners. 3. If God be perfectly good, and His goodness spreads a moral beauty and excellence over all His perfections, then there is nothing to hinder sinners from loving Him but merely their own selfishness. 4. If the supreme glory of God consists in His goodness, then the more clearly His goodness is exhibited before the minds of sinners, the more difficult they always find it to be to love Him. 5. If saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord, then we see one good reason why they love to attend the public worship of God in His house constantly. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The vision of the beauty of God*:—As we confess our belief in God as Three in One and One in Three, the saying of the psalmist is fulfilled in us who, as we dwell in God's temple, rejoice in the vision of God's beauty. 1. Intense was the longing of the psalmist for that vision. It was the "one thing" he "desired and longed after," and in some faint measure attained to. And here, as ever, he but gives voice to the universal cry of man's spirit. Man cannot know what God is except as God reveals Himself to him, "He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto;" "He is One whom no man hath seen or can see." The finite cannot know the Infinite One until He brings Himself within the reach of his knowledge. And yet for this knowledge he must of necessity yearn. In the Man Jesus Christ, God in Himself is revealed. We are not of those whose lot is in the night and whose language is but a cry. No, "we are of the day": for us "the darkness is passed and the true light shineth." For us the Trinity is rest in a measure attained: we rest in the vision of the beauty of God. 2. There are two things that especially arrest us in the beauty of God, as we are taught to contemplate it in the creeds of the Church. (1) There is in Him the beauty of unity. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The unity of God is the primary truth of the Christian faith, and on it as its chief corner stone rests the structure of Christian morality. "Because He is One" we are to "love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength." The simplicity of the Christian character is the practical acknowledgment of the unity of God. Because He is One, He only is to be loved and served. "I am the Lord; that is My Name: and My glory will I not give to another." A divided allegiance in His sight is treason. Because He is One, He is to be served wholly. He is not the God only of the inner self, or of the external life; He claims to reign without and within. (2) There is in Him the beauty of love. In the one God there are three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Our God is no solitary Monad, eternally and essentially solitary, silent and inactive. He is love, and because love is of the very essence of His Being, He must have in Himself love in eternal action. There are and can be in God no dormant powers, no undeveloped capacities. *Deus est purus actus*, this is the necessary condition of His eternal perfection. God is love; see this in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Eternally is the Eternal Son begotten of the Eternal Father; eternally is the Eternal Spirit proceeding from the Eternal Father through the Eternal Son. God is love; within Himself He finds not only an eternal sphere of loving activity, but the satisfaction of love's craving for an eternal communion. The vision of the beauty of love in God draws His people to Him to live in the sunlight of that love. As thus they live, they themselves become possessed by that love which is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. More and more they look on men with eyes enlightened by God's light; they feel for men as does the heart of God. Nay more, as this love possesses them, they rise to higher measures of simplicity of character. Thus then love may dwell in peace; in peace with God; in peace with men: in peace of inner being. Thus gazing on the love of God revealed in the Blessed Trinity, they become themselves conformed to the beauty of His charity and so become to Him a joy. 3. But if we are to live in the vision of God's beauty, there are two essential conditions personal to ourselves. (1) We can only see God when the eyes of our spirits are purified. "The pure in heart see God." For us there cannot be the purity of the unstained. By our very birth we are born blind; by our personal sins our spiritual eyesight has become dim. But there is for us the purity of contrition. By the power of this grace we are cleansed from the blinding sins of the past, and from the obscuring power of failures in the present. Live then the life of penitence: ever yield yourselves up to the guidance of the motive of contrition; avoid sin as you live in the wariness that contrition teaches. (2) And ever remember that this purity can only co-exist with humility. (*G. Body, D.D.*) *The beauty of the Lord*:—"The noblest study of mankind is man." Such an

oft-quoted, widely accepted dictum at least requires challenge. Is it? On thought, challenge gives place to denial. The noblest study of mankind is not man at all, but God. The knowledge of ourselves and our brethren is very valuable knowledge. Without it there can be no wisdom. But still more urgent and important is it for us to know and understand our common Father. Without this there can be no salvation. When Charles Kingsley lay dying, his daughter, coming quietly into the sick-room, overheard him softly repeating to himself the words, "How beautiful God is!" Kingsley was a true worshipper because he was a lover of God. He had felt and responded to the attractiveness, winsomeness, graciousness; in a word, to all the "gathered delightsomeness" of the Divine character. Have we so learnt God in Christ? Note the purpose that inspired the psalmist's prayer. He longed for further visions of God's beauty—"to see the beauty of the Lord." Strictly speaking, beauty is that property, or, rather, assemblage of properties, in a person or object that delights the eye, and satisfies to the full the keen sense of vision. But as the mind and soul possess what corresponds to the organs of vision in the body, by common consent the same word "beauty" is used to describe all those qualities which charm man's intelligence and make successful appeal to his heart. In our daily speech we not only talk about beautiful faces, and beautiful prospects, we speak of thoughts, dispositions, and deeds as beautiful, too. So that there is no incongruity in using this term to set forth the attractive character of God. Of the God of the Christian, the God of the Bible, it is true not only that "honour and majesty are before Him," but also that strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. So that if we have not yet seen the beauty of the Lord the reason may be that we have not been looking at the right God. I am afraid that Amiel's description of God as the "Great Misunderstood" is pathetically true. 1. Misunderstood doctrines account for much misconception. That most misunderstood doctrine of the Atonement accounts for most. There is a painting in a Continental church which illustrates this. God the Father, with angry face, is seen leaning over the battlements of heaven, aiming the arrows of His wrath at the hearts of men below. In the mid-distance His Son Jesus Christ is shown looking upward in the direction of the arrow-shower, running to meet them, catching them in His person, or breaking them with His hands as they fall. What a travesty of Christ's atoning work! Our salvation took its rise in the Father's heart, and we behold the beauty of the blessed God in the face of Christ on the cross as nowhere else. 2. Another reason why we have not yet beheld the Divine beauty may be the condition of our sight. Spiritual beauty appeals to the eye of the soul, and we know not that we are blind. Eyes we all have, but some of us see not. One of Goethe's characters complains that his soul has only feelers. That might be true at that period of his history, but he started with eyes. The power of spiritual vision is a birthright. And yet how many there are who are groping after God, instead of meditating on His seen glory. They need the opening of the eyes of the heart, which is God's gift of grace. 3. A further reason of our failure to see God's beauty is our impatience and hurry. It takes time to behold. (*A. O. Saunderson, M.A.*) *The attractiveness of God's character*:—But, it will be asked, is He not rather a dreadful God? Think of the deluge, the overthrow of Sodom, the plagues of Egypt, and so many other events which show that He "is a consuming fire," and that "the Lord Most High is terrible." How can such a God be of an attractive character? Must we not rather recoil from so awful a Being? No, for the terrible is not always repulsive. The sea-storm and the hurricane are terrible; but yet they are fascinating, and, in some sense, attractive, when we can behold them from a place of security. Thousands of spell-bound on-lookers line the shore when a naval battle is in view; and the mortal shock of hostile armies in the field never wants spectators who are drawn by the grandeur of the scene. In like manner, there is a grandeur, a glory, in the terrors of the Lord, when He punishes transgressors, and takes vengeance on His enemies. It is true that the "Lord Most High is terrible," and that "clouds and darkness are round about Him." But other things are true as well; and these are statements which describe only a part, and a single side, of that character in which His works and His Word exhibit Him. But yet mankind are not drawn to God. Why, if He be so attractive, why is it so common to forget and disregard Him? The answer is, not that the character of God is unattractive, but that mankind are stupid, blind, ungrateful. Human nature is morally diseased. And yet He is good to them notwithstanding. Is not this

beautiful in Him? And all the loveliness of earth and sea and sky symbolize the beauty of the Lord, the attractiveness of His character. Let us then consider—

I. **SOME OF THE ELEMENTS OF THIS BEAUTY.** God is a Spirit. Hence His beauty is spiritual. It cannot be that corporeal kind of beauty which affects the external senses of men. That beauty may be, and we believe is, a symbol and a reflection of it. But spiritual beauty must consist of, and arise from, spiritual qualities and attributes. One of these is—1. Holiness. Sin is not beautiful, though many think it so. But holiness is, and “God is glorious in holiness.” 2. His mercy and grace. The attractiveness of them is more easily perceived, and their influence felt by such as we are. And through them, mainly, sinners are won over to God. Let us try, then, to bring them out. There is the great man—the man of high rank—who regards his inferiors with a haughty look. He walks among them, passes through the midst of them, with proud reserve. Is that man amiable? Can his inferiors love him? No! But there is the great man who is the reverse of all this. What do we say of him? He is amiable. He is attractive. He gains the hearts of his inferiors: Now consider how great God is. What are princes, nobles, kings, compared with Him? Well, and how does this great God bear Himself towards us? Is He cold and distant? Does He ignore us and treat us with disdain? Is not the reverse the truth? Yet again. There is the man who has much, and does not distribute to the poor—the rich man, who hoards up his wealth, and gives little or nothing away—who has the needy on every side of him, and is unmoved by their case, and deaf to their cry. Who can love a man so hard? But there is a man whom we love, and who makes his way into our hearts. It is he who, having wealth, does not keep it to himself, but shares it with such as are less favoured by Providence. Yes, we love that man. There is an attractiveness in his character which we cannot resist. Well, the generous millionaire is, in some measure, like God. In some measure. That is to say, the amiable quality which distinguishes him, we find also in God, and in an infinitely greater degree. Which of us can say that he is not a pensioner on the bounty of God? What has He not given to us? And, above all, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” But how faint is the image of the mercy of God, that we can have from the magnanimity and compassion of the most merciful of men! Who knows the power of His anger? Yet how slow is He to put it forth! It cannot be said that it is easier for Him to pardon and cancel man’s sin than to avenge it. But yet He does so. 3. Another thing, which we may call an element of beauty in God, is the combination of His various attributes in one harmonious whole. The colours of the rainbow are beautiful, when taken one by one: but there is a beauty in the rainbow, which arises not from any single tint: a beauty which is the result of their assemblage and collocation, and consists in their blended radiance. In like manner do the several perfections, which co-exist and unite in the nature of God, produce a glorious beauty.

II. **WHERE THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD MAY BE SEEN.** 1. In nature. 2. In the moral law, for the law is full of love. 3. In the Gospel. 4. In Christ—in His mission; His nature; His character.

III. **SOME TRAITS OF THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.** 1. It never deceives. Contrast—Absalom, Pharisees. 2. It never fades. 3. Never loses its power. 4. Nor disappoints. (*Andrew Gray.*) *The affection of moral esteem towards God:*—Ere we can conceive the love of gratitude towards another, we must see in him the love of kindness towards us; and thus, by those who have failed to distinguish between a love of the benefit, and a love of the benefactor, has the virtue of gratitude been resolved into the love of ourselves. And they have thought that there must surely be a purer affection than this, to mark the outset of the great transition from sin unto righteousness; and the one they have specified is the disinterested love of God. They have given to this last affection a place so early, as to distract the attention of an inquirer from that which is primary. The invitation of “Come and buy without money, and without price,” is not heard by the sinner along with the exaction of loving God for Himself—of loving Him on account of His excellencies—of loving Him because He is lovely. Let us, therefore, try to ascertain whether even this love of moral esteem is not subordinate to the faith of the Gospel; and whether it follows, that because this affection forms so indispensable a part of godliness, faith should, on that account, be deposed from the place of antecedency which belongs to it. We readily and abundantly concede that we are not perfect in God’s will till the love of moral esteem be in us as well as the love of gratitude—till we love God for Himself. Heaven will be no home for us



until we attain to this. How great, then, must be the change which must pass on men of the world ere they are meet for the other world of the spirits of just men made perfect. The natural man can no more admire the Deity through the obscurities in which He is shrouded, than he can admire a landscape which he never saw, and which, at the time of his approach to it, is wrapped in the gloom of midnight. It must be lighted up to him ere he can love it, or enjoy it; and tell us what the degree of his affection for the scenery would be, if, instead of being lighted up by the peaceful approach of a summer morn, it were to blaze into sudden visibility, by the fires of a bursting volcano. Tell us if all the glory and gracefulness of the landscape which had thus started into view, would charm the beholder for a moment from the terrors of his coming destruction! Tell us if it is possible for a sentient being to admit another thought in such circumstances as these, than the thought of his own preservation. Oh, would not the sentiment of fear about himself cast out every sentiment of love for all that he now saw, and, were he only safe, could look upon with ecstasy?—and let the beauty be as exquisite as it may, would not all the power and pleasure of its enchantments fly away from his bosom, were it only seen through the glowing fervency of elements that threatened to destroy him? And so would it be were God in all His holiness, in that character on which the angels gaze with delight, made visible to the natural man. All that is morally fair and magnificent would be before him, but let it all burst upon the eye of a sinner, you may say that he ought to admire and adore, but he cannot; he is in terror, and he can no more look with delight upon God than he can upon a beautiful landscape lit up with the glare of a volcano. Ere we love Him, we must be made to feel the security and the enlargement of one who knows himself to be safe. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me—and then may I love Him and not fear Him; but it is not so with me. But let us see God reconciled to us, and then, delivered from all fear, we may now open our hearts to the influences of affection. Now we shall delight in God for Himself; the love of moral esteem is now free to take up its abode in us as before it could not do. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we love much when we know and believe that our sins are forgiven us. The first matter in hand, then, between God and sinners, in the work of making reconciliation, is, that they believe in Him; that they credit the sayings of the Gospel to be faithful sayings. The first thing is not the disinterested love of God—let none be troubled or embarrassed as if it were—but faith. This is the great starting-point of Christian discipleship. Afterwards there will come love, but not first. Let this consideration shut you up unto the faith. Let it exalt, in your estimation, the mighty importance of a principle, without which there can neither be any sanctification here, nor any salvation hereafter. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The Divine beautifulness*:—"One thing" may well be enough when it includes "the beauty of the Lord." God sends all men choosing-times, and at such periods destinies are sealed. The wise will only ask for more of God. I. THE BEAUTY OF JEHOVAH. We feel it in contemplating—1. The harmonious wholeness of the Divine character. All good is there in due proportion and range. 2. The holiness of God, and especially—3. The love of God. 4. That He is the perfect armour to the human heart. He meets all the wants of our nature. His beautifulness is essential, transcendent, inexhaustible. II. ITS CHIEF SPRING AND PLACE OF UNVEILING. This is the sanctuary. For—1. Its services are replete with the Divine beauty. 2. God is the glory of the house. 3. Communion with God is the only essential. III. ITS MASTERY OF THE HEART. 1. It enthralled the psalmist's soul. 2. It powerfully attracted him. 3. It awaited his coming. 4. Endowed him with good. 5. Crowned his being. (*W. B. Haynes.*) *The beauty of the Lord*:—Many have felt that the most gracious thing in human life is the sight of a fair woman, tenderly nurtured, threading the gloom of our cities, disdaining no corruption of men, seeking it out rather, the shame and ugliness of it, and bringing ease and hope. Many such we have about us. But there is in all lands one pure virgin—the grace of God—which we have seen searching patiently for His sons in the mire, following them through the haunts of sin, waiting through the rage of evil desire. To see that is to see the beauty of the Lord. When David looked for such discoveries in the Temple he was not thinking of the splendour of the buildings and the ritual. The beauty he thought of belonged to a world of things unseen, to which, at best, our religious art can only provide the symbol. And there is a danger for men of taste of

looking for and dwelling in the beauty of accessories, and forgetting the beauty of substance. We all know something of the drowsy spirit which creeps over the Christian, when its one desire is to hear familiar and orthodox phrases sounding again and again. The languor of orthodoxy is not better or worse than the languor of æstheticism; both are connected with things without, with the porch of the pavilion. Within, to reward your seeking, is the King in His beauty. How greatly we all pervert our worship—making it an intellectual gymnastic, or a solemn office of respectability, or a pleasant substitute for piety! The few behold His beauty. (*W. M. Macgregor, M.A.*)

**Vers. 5, 6. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me.—Safety in time of trouble:**—I. David makes account that, while he lives here on earth, he is **LIABLE AND SUBJECT TO MANIFOLD EVILS.** **Reasons**—1. God's Divine sovereignty, whereby He may do with His own what He will, and dispose of His dearest children to endure both sorrow and great affliction. 2. Because of iniquity. (1) David's own sins made him liable to evils of affliction. (2) Likewise the sins of the wicked in his time. (3) Satan's malice. (4) The malice of the wicked, who are the seed of the serpent. **Uses**—1. For instruction. See from David's resolution what is the case and condition of all the godly, viz. to be subject to evils and troubles. 2. For admonition. (1) To the wicked of the world, to beware of self-deceit in promising to themselves continued happiness and freedom from evils, because for the present they enjoy peace and prosperity (1 Pet. iv. 17, 18). (2) To the godly, to bethink themselves with David that troubles may come, and therefore to prepare for them, and to glorify God under afflictions. II. When God shall grant to David to dwell in His house, he doth assure himself of **SPECIAL SAFETY, AND PROTECTION IN TIMES OF TROUBLE** (Ps. lxi. 3, 4, 6, 7). 1. He put his trust and hope in God (Ps. xxi. 7; xi. 1; xvi. 1; lxxxvi. 2). 2. He testified his trust in God by prayer (Ps. vii. 1; cxvi. 3, 4). 3. He made conscience of a godly and upright life, and thereon grounds his assurance of special protection (Ps. iv. 3; xviii. 17, 20). **Uses**—1. For instruction. See here with David the true and right way of safety in time of trouble. In the days of grace, and times of the New Testament, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them (Rev. xxi. 3). 2. For admonition. As we desire safety and shelter in time of trouble, so we must with David strive to endeavour after a sure place in God's house, become true members of God's Church. (1) Break off the course of all known sin, for that prevents society with God. (2) Labour for true faith in Christ. (3) Walk in new obedience. 3. For comfort. This makes greatly to all true believers, in times of trouble: for certainly they have right and title to this immunity of God's house. (1) God will not fail them, nor forsake them (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). (2) God will cause their troubles to work for their good (Rom. viii. 28; Heb. xii. 10). (3) God will give an issue with the trial, that they may be able to bear it (1 Cor. x. 13). (*T. Pierson.*) **The influence of religion upon adversity:**—To a thoughtful mind, no study can appear more important than how to be suitably prepared for the misfortunes of life; so as to contemplate them in prospect without dismay, and, if they must befall, to bear them without dejection. Power has endeavoured to remove adversity to a distance; Philosophy has studied, when it drew nigh, to conquer it by patience; and Wealth has sought out every pleasure that can compensate or alleviate pain. While the wisdom of the world is thus occupied, religion has been no less attentive to the same important object. I. RELIGION PREPARES THE MIND FOR ENCOUNTERING, WITH FORTITUDE, THE MOST SEVERE SHOCKS OF ADVERSITY; WHEREAS VICE, BY ITS NATURAL INFLUENCE ON THE TEMPER, TENDS TO PRODUCE DEJECTION UNDER THE SLIGHTEST TRIALS. In the course of living righteously, soberly, and godly, a good man acquires a steady and well-governed spirit. He has learned firmness and self-command. He is accustomed to look up to that Supreme Providence, which disposes of human affairs, not with reverence only, but with trust and hope. The time of prosperity was to him not merely a season of barren joy, but productive of much useful improvement. He had cultivated his mind. He had stored it with useful knowledge, with good principles, and virtuous dispositions. These resources remain entire, when the days of trouble come. His chief pleasures were always of the calm, innocent, and temperate kind; and over these the changes of the world have the least power. His mind is a kingdom to him; and he can still enjoy it. The world did not bestow upon him all his enjoyments; and therefore it is not in the power of the world, by its most cruel attacks, to carry

them all away. II. THE DISTRESSES OF LIFE ARE ALLEVIATED TO GOOD MEN, BY REFLECTIONS ON THEIR PAST CONDUCT; WHILE, BY SUCH REFLECTIONS, THEY ARE HIGHLY AGGRAVATED TO THE BAD. During the gay and active periods of life, sinners elude, in some measure, the force of conscience. Carried round in the world of affairs and pleasures; intent on contrivance, or eager in pursuit; amused by hope, or elated by enjoyment; they are sheltered, by that crowd of trifles which surrounds them, from serious thought. But conscience is too great a power to remain always suppressed. There is in every man's life a period when he shall be made to stand forth as a real object to his own view: and when that period comes, woe to him who is galled by the sight! Whereas, he who is blessed with a clear conscience, enjoys in the worst conjunctures of human life, a peace, a dignity, an elevation of mind peculiar to virtue. The testimony of a good conscience is indeed to be always distinguished from that presumptuous boast of innocence, which every good Christian totally disclaims. The better he is, he will be more humble, and sensible of his failings. But though he acknowledge that he can claim nothing from God upon the footing of desert, yet he can trust in His merciful acceptance through Jesus Christ, according to the terms of the Gospel. He can hope that his prayers and his alms have come up in memorial before God. The piety and virtue of his former life were as seeds sown in his prosperous state, of which he reaps the fruits in the season of adversity. III. ILL MEN, IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE, CAN LOOK UP TO NO PROTECTOR, WHILE GOOD MEN COMMIT THEMSELVES, WITH TRUST AND HOPE, TO THE CARE OF HEAVEN. The human mind, naturally feeble, is made to feel all its weakness by the pressure of adversity. Now, whither should the ungodly, in this situation, turn for aid? After having contended with the storms of adverse fortune till their spirits are exhausted, gladly would they retreat at last to the sanctuary of religion. But that sanctuary is shut against them; nay, it is environed with terrors. They behold there, not a Protector to whom they can fly, but a Judge whom they dread; and in those moments when they need His friendship the most, they are reduced to deprecate His wrath. But of all the thoughts which can enter into the mind, in the season of distress, the belief of an interest in His favour who rules the world is the most soothing. Every form of religion has afforded to virtuous men some degree of this consolation. But it was reserved for the Christian revelation to carry it to its highest point. For it is the direct scope of that revelation, to accommodate itself to the circumstances of man, under two main views; as guilty in the sight of God, and as struggling with the evils of the world. Under the former, it discovered to him a Mediator and an atonement; under the latter, it promises him the Spirit of grace and consolation. The same hand which holds out forgiveness to the penitent, and assistance to the frail, dispenses comfort and hope to the afflicted. IV. GOOD MEN ARE COMFORTED UNDER THEIR TROUBLES BY THE HOPE OF HEAVEN; WHILE BAD MEN ARE NOT ONLY DEPRIVED OF THIS HOPE, BUT DISTRESSED WITH FEARS ARISING FROM A FUTURE STATE. How miserable the man, who, under the distractions of calamity, hangs doubtful about an event which so nearly concerns him; who, in the midst of doubts and anxieties, approaching to that awful boundary which separates this world from the next, shudders at the dark prospect before him; wishing to exist after death, and yet afraid of that existence; catching at every feeble hope which superstition can afford him, and trembling, in the same moment, from reflection upon his crimes! But blessed be God who hath brought life and immortality to light; who hath not only brought them to light, but secured them to good men; and, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, hath begotten them unto the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Justly is this hope styled in Scripture, the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. For what an anchor is to a ship in a dark night, on an unknown coast, and amidst a boisterous ocean, that is this hope to the soul, when distracted by the confusions of the world. In danger, it gives security; amidst general fluctuation, it affords one fixed point of rest. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) *A sure promise*:—If a man should write upon his sign-board the words, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," he would have plenty of callers. No man dare try the experiment; but God has had those words written above His door for thousands of years, and none have ever called upon Him in vain. (*S. Sellars.*) *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.*—*Safety in the secret of the tabernacle*:—Not only are non-Muhammadans forbidden to enter the sacred enclosure at Mecca, but the territory around Mecca—the Beled el-Haram, or district of the sanctuary—is regarded as a sacred asylum. Here,

according to the sacred law, no war can be waged, no blood can be shed, no animal can be killed, no tree can be cut down. Not even a fly can be killed in the sacred district; but if any of the insect pests which are so common in the East annoy the pilgrim, it is permitted to him, "if they cannot well be endured any longer, to remove them from one part of the body to another." The idea which underlies these whimsical rules is that the place of God's sanctuary should be open only to true believers, to whom it should always be a safe retreat from peril of their enemies. Burton, in his *El Medinah and Mecca*, gives several specimens of Muhammadan belief regarding the miraculous safety to be found in Mecca. The Black Stone and the Place of Abraham have been miraculously preserved from their foes; at the time of the deluge, the great fish of the sea did not eat the little fish of the Meccan Sanctuary; ravenous beasts will not destroy their prey in the Beled el-Harâm; no one is ever hurt in the Kaabah; ten thousand mercies descend upon it daily; and when men see the sacred buildings for the first time their hearts are filled with awe and their eyes with tears. The Qurân expressly teaches that the Kaabah is a safe place of refuge: "Verily the first house appointed unto men was that which is in Becca (Mecca) . . . therein are manifest signs, the place where Abraham stood; and whoso entereth therein, shall be safe." This is but the relic of the old sanctuary idea which is seen in the case of the cities of refuge among the Jews, and in the (limited) right of sanctuary at the horns of the altar (1 Kings ii. 28-31). In many of the ancient Greek temples criminals were given the right of sanctuary, and protected from their pursuers; and in some of the old English churches a stone seat beside the altar was provided for those fleeing to the safety of the church. In pre-Protestant Scotland, excommunication was the penalty of dragging a fugitive from the sanctuaries of the church. A trace of the sanctuary law still exists in Scotland (or existed until lately) in the sanctuary for debtors in the Abbey of Holyrood. (*American Sunday School Times*.) **Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies.**—*The head uplifted among enemies*:—As contrasted with Occidentals, the Orientals seem in many respects to be simply grown-up children. They do not attempt to veil extravagant or unseemly demonstrations of joy or grief, as a European would do, but display their feelings as openly as does a junior school-boy. Especially is this seen in the conduct of enemies toward one another. Those who were in Egypt after the massacre in Alexandria, and before the bombardment, say that they will not soon forget the change which passed over the bearing of the natives toward the foreign Christians at the time of the massacre. Those who before showed an almost servile respect toward the European residents, now marched proudly through the streets, pushing the hated Franks insolently out of their way, and gibing and jeering at their comparative helplessness. All travellers in the East notice the different bearing of an Oriental when he is in an enemy's country, and when he is in a place where his friends are in a majority. The man who skulks in Medeenah will swagger in Mekkeh. An Oriental seldom cares to conceal his consciousness of power, nor does the ruling party conceal its contempt for the ruled. Let a revolution of the political wheel reverse the position of two parties, and the former serf passes into the braggart, and the former braggart into the serf, without any shamefacedness on either side. The psalmist, therefore, compares the safety which he feels to be his in God, to the confident security of the man whose power is assured, and who can lift up his head without fear in the midst of his cringing enemies. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 7-14. **Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice.**—*A prayer of desire and dependence*:—David here expresses—I. HIS DESIRE TOWARDS GOD. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer. 1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience (ver 7). 2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty (ver. 8). (1) The true nature of religious worship. Seeking the face of God. The opening of His hand will satisfy the desire of other living things (Ps. cxlv. 16), but it is only the shining of His face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul (Ps. iv. 6, 7). (2) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty. He calls us by the whispers of His Spirit, to and with our spirits, to seek His face; calls us by His Word, by the stated returns of opportunities for His worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. (3) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation. A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in

the day of His power. 3. He is very particular in his requests. (1) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that. (2) For the continuance of His presence with him. (3) For the benefit of a Divine conduct (ver. 11). (4) For the benefit of a Divine protection (ver. 12). II. HIS DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. 1. That He would help and succour him, when all other helps and succours failed him (ver. 10). God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be. 2. That in due time he should see the displays of His goodness (ver. 13). Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious. Their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail; but their faith is a sovereign cordial. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. 3. That in the meantime he should be strengthened to bear up under his burden (ver. 14). Whether he said it to himself or to his friends, it comes all to one. "He shall strengthen thy heart," shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength—(1) Keep close to God, and to your duty. (2) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest danger and difficulties. (*Matthew Henry, D.D.*) *David's prayer for audience and answer:*—I. WHAT DAVID PRAYED FOR. The audience which David prays for is not the bare act of hearing, in taking notice of what he said in prayer, for he knew well that would never be wanting in God towards man. But by hearing, he means God's favourable act of audience, testified by gracious answers (Ps. cxliii. 1). 1. He knew that God did often, for just causes, deny to give such gracious answers, even to the prayers of His servants. (1) When He would humble them, and correct them for their sins (Ps. lxvi. 18). (2) When He would stir them up to more zeal and fervency in prayer (Matt. xv. 22, etc.). (3) When He will exercise them under some affliction (Ps. xxii. 1, 2). II. THE MANNER OF DAVID'S PRAYING. He cried with his voice; which notes great fervency, zeal and earnestness. 1. Prayer is a good thing, and zealous affection in a good thing is always commendable (Gal. iv. 18). 2. Zeal and fervency in prayer is very moving (James v. 16; Luke xi. 8; xviii. 1-5). 3. God's mercies, testified by gracious promises and answerable performances, notably encouraged him to be zealous and earnest in prayer (Ps. xxii. 4, 5; cvii. 6, 13, 19; vi. 8, 9). 4. His own necessities urged him (Ps. xviii. 4-6). III. DAVID'S ESTEEM OF THIS WORK OF GOD, WHEN HE GIVES AUDIENCE AND ANSWERS TO HIS PRAYERS. The reason is, because he, as every other man, stood guilty of sin, which separates between God and us (Ps. lix. 2). (*T. Pierson.*) *Prayer, a child's cry to God:*—Telephones have been fixed near the cots of sleeping infants, that when they awake and begin to cry the mother may hear them at once and fly to comfort them. Prayer is a child's cry, and God is always listening for it. (*R. Brewin.*)

Ver. 8. **When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.**—*A sweet echo:*—One of the sweetest marvels of nature is "the echo." It is nature's poetry that charms and captivates the mind. Standing, some years back, on a lone mountain side, with giant peaks towering up above on every side, I broke the intense silence with a shout. There was a moment's pause, and then those silent mountains found tongue. From side to side a very artillery was maintained. Echo awoke echo, and a second only gave birth to a third. But there is another echo—that of the heart; the soul's response to the call of God. We have such in the text. Let us consider—I. THE CALL. 1. It is one we often find it very difficult to hear. For the world is not as a silent glen, or lone mountain side, but a very Babel of confused noises. 2. Still it is not impossible to hear it. The ear rightly attuned will hear it, clear as a silver bell, ringing out its note above the surrounding din of business and common cares. 3. But some have never yet heard it, and those who do, hear it in different degrees. There are some persons naturally calm and contemplative, that "dwell with Mary at the Master's feet," and who seem ever to hear it; but there are others, anxious to hear it, but the very clatter of their preparations fill the ear to the exclusion of the Saviour's Word. 4. It comes to us by different instrumentalities. By His Word. The means of grace—the Sabbath especially. The Mercy Seat. The manifold goodness of God in His providence. By trials. By the influence of the Spirit. II. THE ECHO. 1. It is one of the heart. "My heart said," etc. You may read the Word, utter the prayer, keep the Sabbath, and yet there be no heart in it. Like a waxwork figure moved by machinery, you may nod, and smile, and lift up your hands, and yet not have one iota of life. Let

us ask how has it been with us in the past? 2. Now let me give some closing counsels. Be ever listening to hear the voice. When you hear it give the echo at once. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye," etc., "My heart said," etc. When the voice says to you, "Pray," pray at once. Rest assured you shall, if you seek the Lord's face, never be disappointed. "I have never said to the seeking seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain." (*A. G. Brown.*) *The voice and the echo:*—

I. THE REFERENCE. 1. How brief it is. Though a text of but four syllables, it is in itself a Bible; so much is in it, and this much so good. Plainly faith does not require the complete revelation of the Bible to warrant and sustain its exercise. In general, it is not a long passage, but a short sentence, like the point of an arrow striking the mark, or the edge of a sword cutting through and through by a single blow, that does it. 2. How precise it is. It admits no vagueness, no ambiguity, no uncertainty. 3. How affectionate it is. What condescension, benignity, loving-kindness. II. THE RESPONSE. 1. How practical it is. It does what is required—readily, hopefully. 2. How simple it is. Voice answering to voice, heart echoing to heart. 3. How cordial it is. III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM. 1. The reference elicits the response. 2. The response fulfils the reference. (*E. A. Thomson.*) *The Divine call and the human response:*—I. THE DIVINE CALL. It suggests to us—1. The spiritual condition of unsaved men.

They are estranged from God. They have built up between themselves and their Creator an icy cold barrier of heartless indifference, or else an almost impregnable wall of dearly loved sins. This separation is the fruitful cause of all possible misery and destitution, for there is no hell of woe that can give greater pain to human spirits than the consciousness of their apostasy from God. 2. The condescending grace of God in His dealings with unsaved men. He speaks to them, makes gracious overtures, and sends them a message, tender with sympathy, rich in mercy, and pregnant in the promise and potency of a pure and vigorous spiritual life. 3. The nature of true religion. It is the heart of man coming back to God. II. THE HUMAN RESPONSE. 1. Personal. In some things men move in masses without any realization of individual responsibility. It is not so with this momentous question. There is no rest for the sin-troubled heart until it personally turns to God. Personal submission is needed to put our hearts into a right condition for receiving Divine grace. Personal faith brings to our hearts the saving and sanctifying influence of the Spirit. And personal love to the Divine Father is the only guarantee that our peace is made with Him. 2. Prompt. Procrastination is full of danger, it is not only the thief of time, but also the rock of peril upon which many good-intentioned souls have struck and perished. The Ancients taught a solemn truth when they represented Time as an old man with wings on his shoulders, a scythe and hour-glass in his hands, and on his wrinkled forehead one lock of hair, all bald behind, and therefore offering no hope to us when it is past. Let us then seize time by the forelock. 3. Explicit. Men will do anything rather than make an uncompromising surrender. They will turn over a new leaf, sign the pledge, attend the sanctuary, and even take the sacrament. All these are good and right in their place, but they are no substitute for salvation. They cannot set the heart at peace. Any one who tries to make them a compound between God and his own conscience will fail. 4. Sincere. It came from the heart. It is related of a Greek musician that his touch was so delicate and his ear so quick that he would often play a tune on his harp that only his own ear could catch. Whether fact or fable, this incident illustrates God's intercourse with men's hearts. You hear the preacher, but he does not hear your response to his appeal. God always hears it. He is speaking to you now, and His ear is close to your heart, listening to what it will say. (*W. Wheeler.*) *A call and a response:*—We have here a report of a brief dialogue between God, and a devout soul. The psalmist tells us of God's invitation and of his acceptance, and on both he builds the prayer that the face which he had been bidden to seek, and had sought, may not be hid from him. I. GOD'S MERCIFUL CALL TO US ALL. "Seek ye My face." Have we to search for that as if it were something hidden, far off, lost, and only to be recovered by our effort? Not a thousand times. For the seeking to which God mercifully admits us is but the turning of the direction of our desires to Him, the recognition of the fact that His face is more than all else to men, the recognition that whilst there are many that say, "Who will show us any good?" and ask the question impatiently, despairingly, vainly, they that turn the seeking into a prayer, and ask, "Lord I lift Thon the light of Thy countenance upon us," will never ask in vain. By the very make of our own spirits

He calls us to Himself. You remember the old story of the Saracen woman who came to England seeking her lover, and passed through these foreign cities with no word upon her tongue that could be understood of those that heard her except the name that she sought. Ah! That is how men wander through the earth, strangers in the midst of it. They cannot translate the cry of their own hearts, but it means, "God—my soul thirsteth for Thee": and the thirst bids us seek His face. He summons us by all the providences and events of our changeful lives. Our sorrows, by their poignancy, our joys, by their incompleteness and their transiency alike, call us to Him in whom alone the sorrows can be soothed and the joys made full and remain. Our duties, by their heaviness, call us to turn ourselves to Him, in whom alone we can find the strength to fill the rôle that is laid upon us, and to discharge our daily tasks. But, most of all, He summons us to Himself by Him who is the angel of His face, "the effulgence of His glory, and the express image of His person." II. THE DEVOUT SOUL'S RESPONSE. The psalmist takes the general invitation and converts it into an individual one, to which he responds. God's "ye" is met by his "I." The psalmist makes no hesitation or delay—"When Thou saidst . . . my heart said to Thee." The psalmist gathers himself together in a concentrated resolve of a fixed determination—"Thy face will I seek." That is how we ought to respond. Make the general invitation thy very own. God summons all, because He summons each. Again, the psalmist "made haste, and delayed not, but made haste" to respond to the merciful summons. Ah! how many of us, in how many different ways, fall into the snare "by and by"! "not now"; and all these days that slip away whilst we hesitate gather themselves together to be our accusers hereafter. It is poor courtesy to show to a merciful invitation from a bountiful host to say, "After I have looked to the oxen I have bought, and tested them, and measured the field that I have acquired; after I have drunk the sweetness of wedded life with the wife that I have married, then I will come. But, for the present, I pray thee, have me excused." And that is what we all are doing, more or less. The psalmist gathered himself together in a fixed resolve, and said, "I will!" That is what we have to do. A languid seeker will not find; an earnest one will not fail to find. III. A PRAYER BUILT UPON BOTH THE INVITATION AND THE ACCEPTANCE. "Hide not Thy face far from me." That prayer implies that God will not contradict Himself. His promises are commandments. If He bids us seek He binds Himself to show. His veracity, His unchangeableness, are pledged to this, that no man who yields to His invitation will be balked of his desire. (A. Mac-laren, D.D.) *The accepted call*:—I. GOD'S CALL. "Seek ye My face." 1. It teaches that peace with God is not a human device, but a Divine revelation. "Thou saidst." True religion originates with God. 2. Indicates what religion is. "Seek ye My face,"—not My Church, or Book, or ministers, but Me. 3. It implies estrangement. "Seek." 4. That estrangement may cease. II. MAN'S REPLY. "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." 1. Personal. "I." 2. Prompt. "When Thou saidst." 3. Emphatic. "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." 4. Thorough. Reply, almost an echo of call. David practically said, "I mean just what God means." 5. It came from right place. "My heart said." Lips lie, heart never. (T. Kelly.) *The call and the response*:—I. THE CALL THAT COMES TO YOU—"Seek ye My face." Many reasons urge you to listen to this call. Amongst the chief is—1. The character and condescension of the Saviour from whom the call comes. 2. The Divine love that prompts it. 3. It is the assurance of blessing—Divine, precious, abundant, everlasting. How poor is the mirth of the prodigal, how soon it all fades! There is no blessing for such until they come back to God. II. THE RESPONSE. 1. It is a true response. It is the very echo of the call, like the echo of a trumpet amid mountains. 2. It is personal. 3. Hearty. 4. Immediate. 5. Decided—"Thy face will I seek." Conclusion—1. What if you do not seek God? 2. What if you do? (J. P. Chown.) *The echo*:—Ready response to God's call is—1. The natural duty of man. 2. But is nevertheless the work of the Holy Spirit. 3. And is an evidence of election unto salvation. Now concerning this spirit of response to God—I. ITS TOO FREQUENT ABSENCE. In so many and for so long, though at times it has been disturbed. For Christ stands at the door, and knocks. Beware of resisting God. II. ITS CULTIVATION. It should be our constant spirit, prompt to obey whenever God calls. See call of apostles (Luke v. 1-12). See, too, the personality of David's reply, and hearty likewise. And there was full resolve in it. Such echo of God's word is very sweet, like the echo of music amongst the hills. III. ITS SPECIAL OUTLET. The seeking of God's face. God is

over calling us to this. Let our days be more filled up with this blessed work.

IV. ITS REWARD. The margin reads—"My heart said unto Thee, Let my face seek Thy face." It means that the reward of such seeking is blessed communion with God, the joy of Eden restored to us. Our first parents had communion with God, which they lost by sin; but it is now more than restored to us in grace. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Seeking the face of God*:—There appears to be a good deal of autobiography in this psalm. David in his backward glance fixes on two objects. The past as illumined by God's favour, and the past as his own wherein he strove to love and serve God. And from both he draws encouragement to hope that God will be the same, and he humbly resolves that He will be. I. God's voice to THE HEART—"Seek ye My face." The expression is of course figurative. But the most spiritual conception of God is reached, not by a pedantic scrupulosity in avoiding material representations, but by an unhesitating use of these, and the remembrance that they are representations. The unsubstantial abstraction of the metaphysical God, described only in terms as far removed as may be from human analogies, for fear of being guilty of "anthropomorphism," never helped or gladdened any human soul. It is but a bit of mist through which you can see the stars shining. But the God whom we need and can know and love, comes to us in descriptions cast in the mould of humanity, and loses none of His purely Spiritual essence thereby. "The face of the Lord" means the same as "the name of the Lord," and both mean the manifested character of God. If these things be true, then we may learn what it is to "seek His face." We do not need long and painful search, as for something lost in dim darkness, in order to find the sun. We do not need to seek the sun with lanterns, nor to grope after God if haply we may find Him. A man need only come out of his dark hiding-place to find it. If he will but turn his face to the light, the glory will brighten his features and make glad his eyes. And, in like manner, to seek God's face is no long, dubious search, nor is He hard to be found. Endeavour, then, to keep vivid the consciousness of that face as looking always in on you, like the solemn frescoes of the Christ which Angelico painted on the walls of his convent cells, "that each poor brother might feel his Master ever with him." Make Him your companion, and then, though you may feel the awe of the thought, "Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance," you will find a joy deeper than the awe, and learn the blessedness of those, sinful though they may be, who walk in the full brightness of that face. II. THE HEART'S ECHO TO THE VOICE OF GOD. "My heart said unto Thee, Thy face," etc. Immediate, as the thunder to the lightning, the answer follows the invitation. And it needs to be so. If we delay the response it is apt never to be made at all. The first notes of the Divine voice have more persuasive power than after the heart has become familiar with them, even as the first song of the thrush in spring, that breaks the long wintry silence, has a sweetness all its own. The echo answers as soon as the mother-voice ceases. But too many of us hesitate and delay. The only safety, the only peace lies in prompt obedience and in an immediate answer. There is also brought out here very plainly the complete correspondence between the Divine command and the devout man's resolve. Word for word the invitation is repeated in the answer. Like the sailor at the tiller, he answers his captain's directions by repeating them. "Port," says the officer. "Port it is," says the steersman. "Seek ye My face." "Thy face will I seek." The correspondence in words means the correspondence in action and the thorough-going obedience. How unlike the half-and-half seeking, the languid search, as of people listlessly looking for something which they do not much expect to find, and do not much care whether they find or no, which characterizes so many so-called Christians! They are seekers after God, are they? Yes, with less eagerness than they would seek for a sovereign if it had fallen from their fingers into the mud. Note, too, the firm and decisive resolution shining through the very brevity of the words. In the original the brevity—three words only—is yet more marked. Fixed resolves need short professions. A Spartan brevity, as of a man with his lips tightly linked together, is fitting for such purposes. Waverers and the feeble-willed try to brace themselves up by talking, making a fence of words around them. But if we are quite resolved, we shall, for the most part, say little about it. What a contrast is this clear resolve to the indecisions and hesitations so common amongst us! The ship heads now one way and now another, and that not because we are wisely tacking—that is to say, seeking to reach one point by widely-varying courses—but because our hand is so weak on the helm that we



drift wherever the wash of the waves and the buffets of the wind carry us. Further, we have in this heart's echo to the voice of God the conversion of a general invitation into a personal resolution. The call is, "Seek ye." The answer is, "I will seek." That is what we have all to do with God's words. He sows His invitations broadcast; we have to make them our own. He sends out His mercy for a world; we have to claim each our portion. He issues His commands to all; I have to make them the law for my life. The stream flows deep and broad from the throne of God, and parts into four heads, the number expressive of universal diffusion throughout the world; but I have to bring it into my own garden by my own trench, and to carry it to my own lip in my own cup.

III. **THE HEART'S CRY TO GOD FOUNDED ON BOTH THE DIVINE VOICE AND THE HUMAN ECHO.**—"Hide not Thy face far from me" is clearly a prayer built upon both these elements in the past. Both give me the right to pray thus, and are pledges of the answer. As to the former, "Thou saidst, Seek ye My face." You may have exactly as much of God as you want and desire. Then "seek His face evermore," and your life will be bright because you will walk in the light of His countenance always. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Face to face with God*:—The law of creation and of salvation are one, one thing. Both are a process of generation—regeneration. The sun's face and the earth's face must be brought together, in full relationship, and then creation is inevitable. So God's Spirit and man's spirit being brought face to face, the new creation of the soul is inevitable. The sun says to the planets, "Children"—for they are all children of the sun—"seek ye my face." The planets reply, "We will; thy face will we seek. We are cold, dreary, bloomless, barren, we will seek thy face." And forthwith they climb, and climb, a six months' climb from January to June, to the zenith, to the meeting face to face. What then? All that summer and harvest means follows. It is a parable of the soul's salvation. But it is only a parable: infinitely greater and more glorious is the summer which results from the direct relationship of the spirit-face of God and the spirit-face of man; the all-giving face of an infinite Creator, Lord, Father, Saviour, and the receiving faces of His sons and daughters. The most god-like centre of all the glory of God is His own human face. It creates all faces, the angels; for the face of an angel is one that has been so long receiving God's glory that it has become lovely. The face of God is "the express image" of His personality. Your face is not your person, but I see what sort of person you are by your face. Face to face relationship means the exchange of personal thought and feeling, friendship, closest intimacy. All the beauty in the universe comes from the light of God's face. The face of God, the personal face of the personal God, is the meaning of the universe and man. The power that comes from that we call Christ. And He is in every heart. So that the dear mother in the interior of Africa when she was first told about Christ, said, "Oh, that is the name that I have seen in my dreams, one that loves me and comes to me; the beautiful man of the heavens." And God says, "Seek ye My face" at the time that our heart is most disposed to hear it. In your sorrow; at death. (*J. Pulsford.*) *An invitation and reply*:—We are told here that God spoke to the psalmist and what was his reply, but we have no intimation as to the mode of intercourse: whether God spoke through providential dealings, or through the ordinances of the Church, or by His Spirit. And it does not matter. If there be various methods in and through which God is wont to make Himself audible to the human soul, we may take any or all of them as employed to syllable the words, "Seek ye My face." As to the mode in which the psalmist replied, nothing need be said in explanation of that; the reply itself is the all-important thing. It is a conversation between God and the soul, very brief and with no kind of variety, but full of instruction nevertheless. We will, therefore, endeavour to sift this conversation; not only examining the precise meaning of what God directs and man promises, but searching out also what may be more incidentally but not less decisively taught. Now observe—I. **THAT IN THE REPLY MAN DOES LITTLE MORE THAN REPEAT THE WORDS OF GOD.** God says, "Seek ye My face"; man replies, "Thy face, Lord," etc. Now the disposition thus distinctly marked is one the want of which is at the root of half the practical unbelief and miserable inconsistencies by which the visible Church is deformed. Men acknowledge the Divine authority of the Scriptures, but hesitate and cower as to obeying them. What could be more inconsistent and unreasonable? If God speaks and men know and confess it, then what else is there for them but to obey? Nevertheless they do not obey. Even professedly religious men do not. They

object, and deliberate, and find excuse; they do anything but obey. Now it is the very opposite of this which we find here. There falls upon the ear—no matter how—a message which David feels to be from God. It is not a message about which there can be no room for question as to its meaning and the manner in which it should be obeyed. But the observable and admirable thing is, that David did not wait to deliberate, but instantly made his resolution upon hearing God's injunction. II. OBSERVE THAT GOD ADDRESSES US IN PLURAL NUMBER, BUT MAN'S REPLY IS IN THE SINGULAR. "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Now the individualizing God's Word, the taking it individually to oneself, as though designed for oneself, and spoken to oneself—this is very closely connected with the whole practice and the whole comfort of religion. For example, the human race is addressed in Scripture as "fallen and depraved"—far gone from original righteousness, inclined only to iniquity and that too continually. Well, so long as you speak to a man as a man, merely as being one of a sinful kind, one whose sinfulness, like the colour of his skin, he has in common with millions around him, he will generally quite complacently meet the accusation. It will hardly touch him. He may confess to the fact, but give in his confession with a smile. When, however, you try to single him out from the mass; when you speak to him like Nathan to David—"Thou art the man!" then he is full of indignation and resentment, and with Hazael of old is ready to exclaim—"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet, till a man thus separates himself, takes himself out of the mass—feels and confesses without any regard to his being one of a multitude, "I have gone astray, like a lost sheep," till then he has nothing of that feeling of being a sinner that will lead to genuine repentance. Oh! it is so easy to join in a general confession; the hard thing is to make the confession individual. And so with the precepts of Scripture. When they are delivered in the plural they can be listened to with great composure. But make the precept individual and personal, then what shrinking there is, what aversion, what refusal! Reduce therefore piety to a personality. The call may be general—"Seek ye"; the answer must be individual—"I will!" No being content with the confession of masses and multitudes! Alone thou must stand in judgment; alone thou must take thy resolution. When Thou saidst, "Seek ye My face," O Lord, it may have been to the millions that Thy voice was addressed; it may have been by millions that that mighty voice was heard; but I paused not to know whether these millions would keep silence; whether they would join in one vast refusal, or in one vast consent; at once—on the instant—whatever the millions might determine to do, my heart said unto Thee, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." III. WHAT IS IT TO SEEK GOD'S FACE? The more ordinary signification of the phrase, "the face of God," is the love and favour of God—"Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant." "Cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved." How much, then, is implied in this simple bidding—"Seek ye My face"! God would have us come back to Himself. Manifold are the methods by which God thus addresses us. But how often His message is heard and refused, and how terrible if this refusal be persisted in! But if obeyed, then how blessed are we! (H. Melvill, B.D.) *The successful seeker*.—In the former verse David prays, "Hear, O Lord," etc. Now this verse is a ground of that prayer, for God had said to him, "Seek My face," and he had replied, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Note—I. GOD'S COMMAND. 1. God shows Himself to His understanding creature. But why should God bid men seek Him? Because He would have men worship Him, and in order to this God must show him how He will be served. It may be objected that everything proclaims this, to seek God. Though God had not spoken, nor His Word, every creature hath a voice to say, "Seek God." All His benefits have that voice to say, "Seek God." Everything hath a voice. We know God's nature somewhat in the creature, that He is a powerful, a wise, a just God. We see it by the works of creation and providence; but if we should know His nature, and not His will towards us—His commanding will, what He will have us do; and His promising will, what He will do for us—except we have a ground for this from God, the knowledge of His nature is but a confused knowledge; it serves but to make us inexcusable, as in Rom. i. 19 it is proved at large. It is too confused to be the ground of obedience, unless the will of God be discovered before; therefore we must know the mind of God. 2. God is willing to be known. God delights not to hide Himself. God stands not upon state, as some emperors do that think their presence diminisheth respect. God is no such God, but He may be searched into. Man, if any weakness be discovered, we can soon search into

the depth of his excellency; but with God it is clean otherwise. The more we know of Him, the more we shall admire Him. None admire Him more than the blessed angels, that see most of Him, and the blessed spirits that have communion with Him. Therefore He hides not Himself, nay, He desires to be known; and all those that have His Spirit desire to make Him known. 3. God's goodness is a communicative, spreading goodness. Two things make us very like God, that much concern this point: to do things freely of ourselves, and to do them far. To communicate goodness, and to communicate it far to many. The greater the fire is, the further it burns; the greater the love is, the further it extends and communicates itself. There are none more like God than those that communicate what good they have to others, and communicate it as far and remote as they can to extend it to many. 4. The ground of all obedience, of all holy intercourse with God, is a spirit of application. Applying the truths of God, though generally spoken, to ourselves in particular. If we do not—as indeed it is the fault of the times to hear the Word of God loosely—we care not so much to hear the Word of God, as to hear the gifts of men. We desire to hear fine things, to increase notions. We delight in them, and to hear some empty creature, to fasten upon a story or some phrases by the bye. Alas! you come here to hear duties and comforts, if you be good, and sentences against you, if you be naughty. We speak God's threatenings to you that will wound you to hell, except you pull them out by repentance. It is another manner of matter to hear than it is took for. "Take heed how you hear," saith Christ (Luke viii. 18). So we had need, for the Word that we hear now shall judge us at the latter day. Thereupon we should labour for a spirit of application, to make a right use of it as we should. For if we do not, we dishonour God and His bounty and give joy to the devil, for the devil rejoiceth when he seeth what excellent things are laid open in the Church of God, in the ministry, what sweet promises and comforts, but here is nobody to take them and lay hold on them; like a table that is richly furnished, and there is nobody comes and takes it. It makes the devil sport, it rejoiceth the enemy of mankind when we lose so great advantage, that we will not apply those blessed truths and make them our own. II. THE OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND. "Thy face, Lord," etc. I will seek by Thy strength and grace. And this obedience was—1. Present, at once. 2. Pliable, that of a ready, obedient heart. 3. Perfect and sincere. 4. Openly professed, as Josh. xxiv. 15. 5. Continued, and—6. Suitable, answerable to the command. Faith will see light at a little crevice. When it sees an encouragement once, a command, it will soon answer: and when it sees a promise, half a promise, it will welcome it. It is an obedient thing, "the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). It believes, and upon believing, it goes to God. As the servants of the king of Assyria, they catch the Word presently, "Thy servant Benhadad" (1 Kings xx. 32); so faith, it catcheth the Word. (*R. Sibbes.*) *The answering heart*:—I. THE LORD'S INVITATION. An invitation—1. Supremely beneficent. 2. Graciously merciful. 3. Infinitely condescending. II. THE BELIEVER'S REPLY. 1. A wise resolve. 2. A blessed heritage. 3. An eternal privilege. In heaven they see His face. III. THE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY—"When Thou saidst." This opportunity is—1. Universal. To all who hear the Gospel. 2. Continuous. From life till death. 3. Varied. Bible, conscience, providence. 4. Unsolicited. God makes the first approach. (*Homilist.*) *Kind words should awaken kind echoes*:—Walking one day in the Queen's Park, Edinburgh, I heard the music of a military band. I could not see the musicians, but the great rocks above me echoed the music, note for note, and one could have thought that the players themselves were hidden there. Now if granite rocks render sweet echoes to sweet music, how much more should our souls respond to the sweet calls of our Saviour's voice and say, "When Thou saidst unto me, 'Seek ye My face,' my heart said unto Thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" (*R. Brewin.*)

Ver. 9. **Hide not Thy face far from me.**—*Hide not Thy face from me*:—1. The surpassing worth and excellence of God's special favour, whereof he would not be deprived (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3). 2. He knew the displeasure of God was a most heavy and grievous thing, which no creature is able to bear (Ps. lxxvi. 7). 3. He knew his own guilt of sin, both original (Ps. li. 5) and actual (Ps. li. 3, 4). 4. He was not ignorant of God's sovereignty over all, whereby He may, even for trial of grace, hide His face, and seem angry with His dearest servants. Uses—1. For instruction. (1) See in David what the godly think of the want of God's favour: that it is a most grievous and bitter

thing; as if a father should put away a child in anger, leave him and forsake him. (2) See here that the true child of God may, for a time, want the feeling of God's special favour, and remain under the sense of His displeasure (Ps. xxxviii. 1, 2). (3) See that prayer is a blessed and sanctified means whereby the child of God may comfortably wait for the blessing of God's favour. 2. For admonition. (1) That we examine ourselves, how our hearts esteem the want of feeling God's special love and favour in Christ. (2) Learn not to be dismayed for the temporary hiding of God's face or sustaining of His anger. (T. Pierson.) **Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me.**—*A mighty plea*:—In times of distress it is not well always to have a choice of helpers. For while we are selecting, our danger may have overtaken us. While the fox was considering which way to run, the hounds had seized him; while the sick man was selecting the physician, his disease carried him off. It is well to be shut up to one help, if that help is all we need; as the old proverb hath it: "Hobson's choice, that or none." Now, this is the believer's condition. And it is well in going to God to have a good plea, such as is provided for us here: "Thou hast been my help." A soul in sore distress is in no fit condition to puzzle itself over deep, dark reasonings; it wants a child's plea, just as Dr. Guthrie, when dying, wanted "bairns' hymns." It is told of a famous Hebrew scholar, Dr. John Duncan of Edinburgh, that he was easily imposed upon; but the imposition never moved him, and he was willing to submit to it for the chance of doing good. He said, "I find they know how to get round me; they say, 'You helped me before'; and I never can resist that: it teaches me how to pray." And do we not like to help our old pensioners? and they know we do. Now, in our text we have: I. EXPERIENCE GRATEFULLY TELLING HER TALE. How many of us can and must say, "O God, Thou hast been my help"? Go over the history of David, and see how often he had cause to say this. II. NECESSITY PLEADING EXPERIENCE. She pleads, "It is consistent with Thy holiness; it is within Thy power; it is fitting to Thy wisdom; or else all that Thou hast done will be thrown away. Thou art the unchanging God, and to Thy love I appeal." It is the plea of a child to a father, "Father, thou hast always fed me: wilt thou let me starve?" III. EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTING FAITH. To trust, because God has been your help for so long; and so constantly and so singularly; and with glory to Himself. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 10. **When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.**—*Perishable good measured against the unchangeable portion*:—Change is earth's perpetual motto. It is grown on her ever-varying seasons; it gives material for her daily history; and it marks with chequered and subtle lines the biographies of her happiest sons. It were an unprofitable question to inquire how far, apart from religious considerations, man is the better for this law of change. He loves it not. He would be content with a much smaller amount of earthly comforts could they but be made permanent and secure for him. But this security never can be given, and even where it is given to the largest extent possible to human circumstances, men are restless and discontented still, always desiring something other than it is. But as this desire of change tells us that we are not as our Creator made us, so the existence of change tells us that this world is not our home. In heaven we shall require no change, and it will furnish none. There will be progression, but not change. The soul may be nearing its approaches to the blessedness and purity of its Author, without ever finding the terminus of its own perfection, or feeling that it can expand no more. But here the soul is subject to change. Now it soars aloft on hope's joyous pinion; now falls, with its broken wing, into the pit of despair. And who of all men knew the vicissitudes of life more than the author of this psalm? But David had learned when earthly joys failed him to set his heart on heavenly ones. Let us, then, consider.—I. THE PRECARIOUS TENURE IN WHICH WE HOLD EVERY EARTHLY BLESSING. Health, life, possessions, intellect, home affections—what security have we that any of these things will last? Do we not know how easily they may, any or all of them, be broken in upon and lost? II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PORTION WHEN ALL OTHER BLESSINGS FAIL. God seems to say, "I must remind them that this is not their home: I must cause that cherished object to forsake them, in order that My infinite mercy may take them up." But we may be certain that the Christian's portion is sufficient because: 1. Of the comprehensiveness of the Divine assurances. 2. Of the perfections of the Divine

character. 3. The intercession of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *Forsaken by man, favoured by God*:—I. THAT DAVID'S FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SO HIS NEAREST AND DEAREST FRIENDS, MIGHT LEAVE AND FORSAKE HIM. 1. Through fear of Saul. 2. By Divine disposition, for the trial of David's faith and patience. Uses—1. For instruction. (1) It shows most plainly how vain and uncertain the help of man is in time of need (Ps. lx. 11; lxii. 9). The mutability of his affection. The instability of his condition. (2) See in David what may be the case of God's own dear children, even to be forsaken of their nearest and dearest earthly friends in time of distress (Ps. lxxviii. 9, 20; 2 Tim. iv. 16). 2. For admonition. (1) That, seeing father and mother may forsake us, we put not our trust in men, be they never so near or dear unto us (Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4). (2) That we be not dismayed when our friends do fail us (Matt. x. 24, 25). II. THAT WHEN DAVID'S NEAREST AND DEAREST FRIENDS FORSAKE HIM, THEN THE LORD WOULD GATHER HIM UP. 1. David stood rightly and truly in covenant with God, and so was interested in God's special providence. 2. David trusted in God (Ps. vii. 1; cxxv. 1; xci. 1, etc.). 3. David was holy in life and conversation, which gave him good assurance of special preservation (Ps. xviii. 17, 23). Uses—1. For instruction. (1) The stability of God's love towards those that are truly His (Heb. xiii. 5; John xiii. 1). (2) The happiness of the godly. 2. For admonition. It serves effectually to move every one that desires this comfortable state both to get and preserve those graces in his soul, and also to testify that behaviour in life which entitled David to it. 3. For comfort. The godly, in times of distress, must call to mind this property in God, to be more firm and faithful to those that are His than natural parents are to their dearest children. (*T. Pierson.*) *God our succour when others fail*:—1. The love of our heavenly Father towards all men, but especially His children by adoption and grace, is infinitely beyond the love of earthly parents towards their children. (1) They may prove unnatural; their bowels may be crusted up against the fruit of their own bowels. But the Lord cannot but love His people. He can as well cease to be, as to love. (2) Their love may be alienated by needless jealousies, or false suggestions, and so lost. But His love is durable; He loveth His own unto the end. He knoweth the singleness of their hearts, and will receive no accusation against them. They, alas, are negligent enough; unthankful, undutiful children: nay, stubborn and rebellious. But as David's heart longed after Absalom, because he was his son, though a very ungracious one: so His bowels yearn after those that are no ways worthy to be called His sons. Forgiving all their by-past miscarriages upon their true repentance; receiving them with gladness, though they have squandered away all their portion with riotous living, if they return to Him in any time with humble, obedient, and perfect hearts; and in the meantime using very many admonitions, entreaties, and other artifices to win them to repentance; and forbearing them with much patience; that they may have space enough to repent in. And if upon such indulgences and insinuations they shall come in; He will not only welcome them with kind embraces, but do His part also to hold them in, when they are even ready to fly out again, and were it not for that hold, would in all likelihood so do. (3) Parents' affections may be so strongly biassed another way, that in the pursuit of other delights they may either forget or disregard their children. But no such thing can befall our heavenly Father, who taketh pleasure in His people and in their prosperity. 2. Fathers and mothers, through human ignorance, cannot perfectly understand the griefs of their children, nor infallibly know how to remedy them if they did. But God, who dwelleth in light, nay, who is light, knoweth the inmost recesses, the darkest thoughts and secrets of all men's hearts, better than themselves do. He perfectly understandeth all their wants, and what supplies are fittest in their respective conditions. His blessings are our daily food, His corrections our physic. 3. Whereas our earthly parents have a limited and very narrow power, and cannot therefore do their children the good they would; our heavenly Father's power is infinite: not hindered by any resistance, or retarded by any impediments; not disabled by any casualties, occurrences, or straitness of time. 4. Our fathers and mothers, where are they? And do prophets, or Princes, or any sort of men live for ever? They all pass like a shadow, wither as grass, and are driven away as the grasshopper. When they must go, they cannot help themselves: and when they are gone, they cannot help us. They are mortal men; He the immortal God: they are dying men; He the living God. Life is one of His prerogatives royal. And therefore, when our fathers and mothers, and friends

forsake us, because either their love faileth, or their skill faileth, or their power faileth, or their life faileth; our heavenly Father, who wanteth neither love, nor wisdom, nor power, nor life, but is infinite in all; we may rest assured in every way accomplished to succour us at all assays, and to take us up. And that He will engage all these for our relief, if we will but cast ourselves wholly upon Him; we have His gracious promise to fill up the measure of our assurance. (*Bp. Sanderson.*) *God's care over the forsaken:*—On the topmost stone of the Royal Exchange in the centre of London is carved a large grasshopper. That figure is a sermon in stone upon this text. Some four hundred years ago a woman was passing along a country lane some miles from London, and placed a baby boy under a hedge, carefully wrapped up in a shawl. Soon after a boy passed by on his way home from school, and his attention was attracted to a grasshopper that crossed his path. Stooping down to find it, he saw the baby fast asleep. He joyfully took it home to his mother, who adopted the little stranger. The forsaken child thus providentially saved became one of London's greatest merchants, and after years of prosperity he built the Royal Exchange.

**Ver. 11. Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.**—*Our observers:*—Instead of "enemies," the margin reads "observers." And we have many such. I. **THE WORLD**—with keen and malignant eye. If we act inconsistently with our profession, they will be sure to notice it and despise us, and our religion accordingly. II. **SAINTS.** They observe us from a sense of love and duty; they are commanded to "admonish," "exhort," and "consider one another." III. **MINISTERS** are our observers. They are to take heed to the flock over which, etc. IV. **ANGEL OBSERVERS.** We are a spectacle to angels as well as to men. V. **ABOVE ALL, GOD OBSERVES US.** He bids us walk before Him and be perfect. We are men in secret, but observed at all times. Surely we need wisdom and strength far above our own. (*W. Jay.*) *Divine direction:*—I. **THE TEXT IS APPLICABLE TO BELIEVERS IN ALL AGES, SINCE ALL NEED THE SAME DIRECTION AND INSTRUCTION.** How many have attempted to reach the summit of Parnassus, from which they might view the flowers of rhetoric and the fruits of philosophy flourishing beneath their feet; but how few have ascended far above the base of the mount before they have been discouraged by its amazing height, when they have returned in despair of ever attaining to such an elevation. Although David prayed to be led in a plain path, yet he neither thought nor expected that this path was to be attended with no difficulties,—free from all pain, and full of unfading pleasure. All that any one can reasonably desire, who prefers the prayer contained in the text, is that God would graciously vouchsafe such guidance, that we may not swerve from that true and living way, marked out in the councils of His love, and made manifest by Him who declares Himself to be the "way, the truth, and the life." One reason why so many mistake the plain path, arises partly from the pride of the human mind, which would rather employ its faculties upon those subjects which relate to things temporal, as bearing upon man's present enjoyment, than direct its energies to the pursuit of those objects which lie beyond the precincts of time, and are connected with unseen and spiritual realities. How often are the most elevated minds and soaring spirits engaged rather in those speculations which tend more to increase scepticism, than to diminish error! How unwilling is the loftiness of intellect to bow to the humiliating doctrine of the Cross! And how reluctant is the philosophic sage to stoop from the heights of scientific discovery, and condescend to the humble condition of a learner at the feet of the despised Nazarene! II. **THE ORDINARY WAY IN WHICH GOD LEADS HIS PEOPLE TO THEIR HEAVENLY REST.** Surely the rewards and punishments of another life, which the Almighty has established as the enforcements of His law, are of sufficient weight to determine the choice, against whatever pleasure or pain this life can show, when the eternal state is considered in reference merely to its bare possibility, of which possibility no one can have any doubt. If the good man be in the right, he is eternally happy; if he mistakes, he is not miserable, for he feels nothing. On the other hand, if the wicked be in the right, he is not happy; if he mistakes, he is infinitely miserable. But in that manifestation of mercy, vouchsafed by that better and brighter dispensation made known by Christ, we are not left to mere hypothesis in order to elucidate the vast extremes of infinite felicity and eternal misery. Since life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, we can behold in the mirror of Revelation that light and joy, which we could not see inscribed in the fairest productions of Nature, nor ever attain

in the ample reign of philosophical research or metaphysical discussion, but in the path marked out by Him who hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps. (*N. Meeres, B.D.*) *Safe landing amid many dangers*:—As a great ocean steamer nears a coast, the captain and helmsman need a minuteness of knowledge which they do not possess. Unknown dangers, hidden rocks and shoals, are all around them. So a pilot comes off from shore, climbs on board, and takes his place at the wheel. Instantly the control of the ship is transferred from ignorance to knowledge and incompetency to ability. Just such a transfer takes place in a life that is surrendered to the Infinite Pilot. He knows every sea, to the least shifting bar and the slightest wind that blows. He will bring us to the desired haven. (*Christian Commonwealth.*)

Ver. 13. **I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.**—*The goodness of God in the land of the living*:—The words "I had fainted" are not in the original. The sentence is a broken one, such as one utters under strong emotion, suggesting possibilities, but leaving the hearer or reader to supply them for himself. "O had I not believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living"—and then he breaks off, and we are left to imagine what dreadful thing would have happened. I. GOD'S GOODNESS IS OFTEN A MATTER OF FAITH RATHER THAN OF SIGHT. A good purpose of His often takes time to ripen. Sometimes it is long before it even appears above ground. Meanwhile there is the bleak, dreary field. In Nature we know what to expect, so that the harvest is hardly a matter of faith. Still, our Lord teaches that the attitude of the farmer, while he waits for the harvest, should be that of His disciples in regard to the Kingdom of God. Faith in God implies faith in good. The word "God" is "good." God is not God except He be good. But it is easier to believe this as an abstract fact than in its practical applications; for there are times when we cannot see the goodness of the Lord. II. WE FAINT BECAUSE WE DO NOT SEE IT. This brought out more strongly by the added words, "in the land of the living." It is here where we want to see it, here in this scene of strife, rebellion, cruelty, extortion, and all manner of evil. We are not troubled about God's goodness in the next world. The believer takes it for granted, indeed, that there every cloud will be dispelled and every hard question settled. It is God's goodness in the land of the living which sometimes puzzles him. It might be comparatively easy, as I have said, to frame an abstract conception of a perfect being, and to write under it "Supremely Good," but goodness is not an abstract thing. Goodness takes shape and consistency only by contact with objects. As a mere abstract quality it has no practical significance. You may as well affirm it of a statue. It has meaning only as it is exercised. But if God be infinitely good, how can sin and evil be? This is the knotty point. Neither the Epicurean, by getting rid of God in human life; nor the Deist, nor the Pantheist, give any real help. Given the existence of a personal God, and the existence and work of evil is not an easy matter to resolve. The question is summed up in a passage of that favourite book of our childhood, *Robinson Crusoe*, where the poor heathen Friday asks in all simplicity why God, being all-powerful, did not kill the devil. Many of us have asked the same question. And yet the fact of such goodness visible in the world and in human life is assumed by the psalmist. He has faith in it. He believed to see it in the land of the living. Can we see as much? 1. God does not throw us entirely upon testimony as to this, for His goodness can be seen, both here and now. However hard we may find it to reconcile this fact with other facts, it is true that the world and human life furnish multiplied evidences of God's goodness which appeal to the ordinary sense. The provisions of Nature are illustrations of this. It was something more than mere ingenious artifice which made the bread-fruit grow in the tropics and not in the northern latitudes. Similarly this goodness is seen in a thousand things in the social and domestic life of men. There is the setting of the solitary in families, and the blessed ties which unite husband and wife and parent and child. There are these things and many more like them. And each one of us if we had our sorrows, we have had our joys. Life has brought blows, but it has also brought balsams: calamities, but also mitigations. Labour has been offset with rest; tears with smiles. No life has been utterly bleak and barren. And for many of the worst of our calamities we have had only ourselves to blame. They have come through our refusing the goodness of God. Now all these appeal to our senses, and God would have us reason from the seen to the unseen, from

that we can comprehend to that which we cannot. If we look at the state of society alone and affirm the evidence of a beneficent will, we must often confess what seems as if the contrary were true. 2. But we must hold to what we know of God's goodness and trust where we cannot know. The popular proverb says, "Seeing is believing"; but the Scripture reverses that proverb; "believing is seeing." We shall faint if we do not believe. Because there is an earthquake shall I cease to believe in gravitation? I remember a land-locked bay, which, from some peculiarity or other, the tide used to leave two-thirds bare when it ebbed. It was one of the loveliest spots I ever saw at high water, but one of the most ghastly when the tide was out. I might stand by the shore and look out over the dismal expanse of mud, and say, "The place is ruined: it never will be beautiful any more." I look down into the stagnant pools, and they are glassy and motionless under the hot sun, and I say, "The tide is gone, the joy and life of the ocean come hither no more." Fool that I am. Out yonder in the ocean depths, even while I mourn, the sea is rallying, and gathering itself up to move upon the land. By and by the stagnant pools will begin to stir, and the little eddies to whirl, and pool to reach over to pool and to run into one, until soon the bay will be brimming again, and the mud-banks hidden and the fresh, living tide enfolding the rocks. There are periods of slack-water in the history of individuals, of churches, and of nations; periods of mud and stagnation; days and years without a ripple. And when the ripple begins to come, and the stagnation begins to be stirred, that which is the presage of better things often makes the prospect look uglier than before. It takes strong souls to go through such periods; believing souls, which have settled faith in the laws of God's tides, and which believe in the force when they do not see the ripple or the wave. Breaking-up is a not uncommon fact in the lives of good men and women. Occasionally they are thrown out of their tight, comfortable ships, and see the ships go to pieces, and have to cling to fragments or make rafts. It is hard to see goodness in such wreck as that; and yet when a ship goes down at sea, the man who has a life-preserver or a timber thinks himself happy. The question is whether we can bring ourselves to think that God is good when He transfers us from the ship to the timber: whether we can stretch the word goodness to cover timbers and rafts, and life-preservers as well as ships. If we have taken it for granted that God's goodness means only a sound ship and a voyage compassed the whole way with its protections and comforts, then the wreck and the raft will come to us as terrible surprises. If, on the other hand, we believe in the fact of the goodness of the Lord, any way, ship or raft, storm or sunshine, sailing into port or washed ashore, we shall be strong-hearted and hopeful on the raft no less than on the ship. Only it is well that we take care how we build our ship to begin with. If it is to go to pieces, it is well that the pieces be strong; well that we provide something that will float when the wreck breaks up. If a man's life is put together with selfishness, greed, pride, vanity, he stands a poor chance when the structure is broken up. If he puts out to sea with only his money or his cunning or his social repute or his political or professional or business-standing under him, he will find that such timbers will not float him. They will break with the breaking of the ship. But faith, hope and love are buoyant. If a man has in his ship this triple plank of faith, nothing can send him to the bottom. Life's currents will bear him to land alive. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *A sure cure for pessimism*:—I. FAITH EXPECTS TO SEE ENRAPTURING VISIONS. 1. What? "The goodness of the Lord." The forces of God are adequate to overcome the forces of evil. The eternal right must prosper. God will do more than hold His own. No good reason is there to be hopeless about a world that has God in it and over it. 2. Where? "In the land of the living." That the goodness of the Lord will be seen in the land of the dead no one doubts; what we sometimes forget is that we are to look for increasing revelations of His goodness in the present. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is." "The meek shall inherit the earth." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." II. FAITH AWAKENS FORTITUDE. It gives strength of heart and hope; inspires courage; lights the eye; nerves the impotent arm; plucks victory from defeat. III. FAITH LEADS TO FIDELITY. Those who are full of faith are characterized by faithfulness; they can be depended upon to do their duty, for they have an abiding principle of obedience within their hearts. So long as we are in the world we must needs battle against adverse circumstances, but let us see to it that over against every evil we put the Heaven-provided antidote; that over against



worldly trouble we put Divine comfort; that over against painful discipline we put the Divine purpose; that over against the world's sin we put the world's Saviour. (*J. M. Campbell.*) *Pessimism, an untenable theory of the Universe*:—Yet, though the creed of despair it throws its dark shadow over thousands both in Germany and England. It argues thus:—Seeing the evil and misery that exist and have existed from the beginning, how is it possible to believe in a Being who is omnipotent and omniscient? If He knew of all this, He could have prevented it; and if He did not do so, how can I believe in His goodness? Now, none of us can fully despair of the difficulty, but yet there are considerations which may help our faith; as, I. GREAT AS IS THE MISERY OF THE WORLD, IT IS NOT SO GREAT AS IT SOMETIMES SEEMS. Anguish, suffering, sorrow, are not the prevailing notes in the music of earth. Calamities are the exception, not the rule. II. MUCH OF THE MISERY WE DEPLORE IS NOT SO GREAT TO THOSE WHO BEAR IT AS IT APPEARS TO US. Use is second nature, and what we are used to does not make us unhappy as it otherwise would. III. THE CAPACITY FOR SORROW IS ESSENTIAL TO THE CAPACITY FOR JOY. A sorrowless world would be a joyless one. IV. WITH MUCH OF MAN'S MISERY GOD IS NOT CHARGEABLE AT ALL. It is the result of man's sin. (*W. Garrett Horder.*) *Believing to see*:—I have taken the whole verse, but the words at which I catch are these: "Unless I had believed to see." Most people see to believe; but here is the true Gospel order. Oh that some now may believe to see! Note—

I. A DOCTRINE STATED. Salvation is by faith. That is the great act by which man is saved. If he believes he is saved. II. DIFFICULTIES OF THE AWAKENED SOUL. 1. Want of feeling. 2. Sense of ill-desert. 3. Cannot see evidences in ourselves. But these will come if you believe first. They are the product, and not the cause, of faith. 4. Repentance not deep enough. 5. No great joy. 6. Sanctification and likeness to Christ so slight. III. DIRECTIONS TO MORE ADVANCED BELIEVERS. The whole course of the Christian life must be believing to see. In our enterprises for God. In our inward conflicts. In doctrinal perplexities. In times of prosperity our only safeguard is to believe beforehand. In our journey to heaven. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The soul's faith in the goodness of God*:—I. THE CONDITION OF SAINTS IN THIS PRESENT WORLD, as to the trials they are subjected to. We are born sinners into a world that lies in wickedness; and hence are brought forth to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward. We are cast on a climate where Satan rules. And those who are new-born, are the peculiar objects of his hatred and rage: whom he will, by policy or power, seek to deceive and destroy. It were hence easy to show, that the trials of saints in the present life are neither light nor few. II. THE SOUL'S FAITH IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD in the land of the living. That is, the felicity of the better world. Now, this faith is 1. Of a very earnest kind. 2. It causes the soul to prefer this goodness of the Lord above all things else. 3. It is accompanied with a well-grounded hope of the happiness to be enjoyed above. 4. It works the heart to a patient waiting for it. 5. It excites to most serious diligence that they do not come short. III. IN WHAT MANNER THIS FAITH KEEPS THE SOUL FROM FAINTING. 1. Because of the transcendent excellency the believing soul discerns in what God has promised. 2. Because such souls see in their sufferings that which will prepare them for the heavenly felicity (1 Cor. iv. 17). 3. Because they anticipate what awaits them there. 4. Because it arms them against all present temptation and murmuring of the flesh, and endues them with courage to hold on their way. IV. APPLICATION. 1. It is vain to expect peace on earth. 2. Hence be assured there is an after-state where God will distinguish between the good and the evil. 3. Consider how great our privilege in the Gospel. 4. Make sure that you be born again for a better world. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The fainting relieved by faith*:—What are the lessons which our text teaches? I. It teaches that SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD FLOWS FROM THE WORD OF GOD AS THE MEANS. In the Word there are many clearly established principles, designed and calculated to quiet the mind under trials. 1. God admonishes us to this effect. The Word of God is the inspired commentary on the book of Providence. Compare the events of your life. Providence illustrates the Scriptures, and they explain Providence. If you look only at Providence, you cannot see the love of God to His people in those dispensations which are dark and afflictive. You would think that your heavenly Father had forgotten you. But the Word of God answers us that it is not so. 2. For they show us that all events are appointed or permitted by God. Nothing is by chance. 3. And that all temporal things are subservient to what is spiritual (Rom. viii. 28; Ps. xxv. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 17). 4. That death does not terminate our existence. Look to the

future state in the light of Divine revelation: that unravels the whole mystery. All that was dark in the ways of Providence is there illuminated; all that appeared disorderly is there arranged; all that seemed evil is there felt and acknowledged to be good. II. SUBMISSION FLOWS FROM FAITH AS FROM THE INSTRUMENT. Many have read the discoveries of Divine revelation, and have been strangers to unfeigned submission, because they do not fully and firmly believe these discoveries. That the exercise of faith is necessary in order to maintain this state of mind, appears from the following considerations:—1. Those truths contained in the Scriptures, designed and calculated to produce submission, relate to things unseen and eternal (2 Cor. iv.). 2. Faith prevents hasty and unwarranted conclusions respecting the doings of God. It is a common error, when a trial befalls us, to conclude at once that it is against us; and this error results from unbelief of the faithfulness of God to His promises. This was the conclusion of David, who "said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." But "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Heb. ii. 3, 4). 3. Faith has respect to the time past, as well as the time to come: to what is recorded of the doings of the Lord, as well as to what is promised. 4. All the treasures of grace are communicated through Christ, and by Him to His people; and of His fulness they all receive. (*Robert Cranston.*)

Ver. 14. **Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.**—*The Christian's strength:*—The Church of God has often been in a low, languishing, and, to all human appearance, in a desperate condition; yet one thing, as Solomon says, is set against another, and it has been at such times that His people have realized most fully the comforts of His providence and gracious presence. These stars shine brightest in dark winter nights. How wonderful have been God's deliverances of His people. The Bible is full of such records. And during their trials God does not leave His people comfortless. See this psalm. David here gives his own experience, and he bids us "wait on the Lord." Note—I. **HOW WE ARE TO WAIT ON GOD.** 1. In His ordinances. Where did Simeon and Anna wait? Where did Joseph and Mary find Jesus when they had lost Him? He was surprised that they had not thought of the temple, where after three days they found Him. The first place they should have sought Him in was the last they thought of. Nowhere is the sinner more likely, or so likely, to find Him as where the crowd is met and the cross is raised—in His Father's house. Besides the public ordinances of religion, such as the communion table and Sabbath services, in the use of which we are to wait upon the Lord, there are other means of grace at our service; and still more fully within our reach. The communion table is but occasionally spread, and the doors of the church may be thrown open only once a week; but the pages of the Bible are always open, and the gates of prayer, like those of heaven, are never shut. And we are to wait with faith and perseverance. The farmer sows in faith that the harvest season will come, he waits and works for it. Far away from the billows that are breaking out on the sandy shore, the vessel lies upon the beach, doomed as it would seem to rot; why then do men climb her shrouds, and man the yards, and shake out broad sheets of canvas, and loose her moorings, to catch the breeze and bear away across the deep? Theirs are acts of faith; they believe in the law of tides, and that, every billow breaking nearer and nearer, the waters at length shall wash her keel, and, rising on her sides, float her off the sands—they wait and work for that. II. **THEY THAT WAIT ON THE LORD SHALL RECEIVE STRENGTH.** Thus God shall make good His promise, "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be." Why, then, it may be asked, do men go from the house of God and from a communion table to be worsted "as at other times before," by the devil, the world, and the flesh? Baptize a withering plant with water, and it lifts up its head, casts off the old leaves, and puts out a fresh crop of buds and blossoms. But why, then, are men not always the better for the ordinances of religion? The plant revives. Why not the soul? The answer is not far to seek. The ordinances of religion are compared to wells of water; but then, they are like Jacob's well. The water lies far below the surface; and to the men of the world, the mere professor of religion who has the name but not the faith of a Christian, we may say, as the woman said to our Lord, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Faith is, as it were, the rope, and our souls the vessel which we let down into this well to fill them with

living water. But that they do no good to some, forms no reason why we should despise, or neglect ordinances. It is no fault in the bread, that, thrust between a dead man's teeth, it does not nourish him. The truth is, that we must have spiritual life to get the benefit of religious ordinances. Water will revive a withering, but not a withered plant; wine will restore a dying, but not a dead man. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Waiting on the Lord*:—No one could be better qualified than David to offer this counsel. Now to you who are tried by the delay of God's promises, as David was, we would explain from the text. I. **THE REMARKABLENESS OF WAITING UPON GOD.** For—1. He alone can supply our need. "Our expectation is from Him," whether it be spiritual or temporal deliverance that we desire. 2. He is faithful as well as all powerful. 3. And He knows what is best to be done. He has all wisdom. God sees, as we do not, all the consequences of granting our desires. II. **THE NECESSITY OF IT.** There is no alternative for us as believers. God is under necessity to be good, He cannot be otherwise; therefore we are under necessity to wait for Him. III. **THE BENEFIT OF SO WAITING.** God "will strengthen thine heart." And that there will be good to us arises from—1. The fact of Christ's intercession for us. 2. The Holy Spirit is ever ready to help us. See the experience of Paul when troubled by "the thorn in the flesh." He waited upon the Lord and he was helped. And so shall it be with us. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*) *Waiting on the Lord*:—This waiting on the Lord must be—I. **AN HUMBLE WAITING.** Humility is not so much to think meanly of oneself, as not to think of oneself at all. The high places of God are very low. The lowly in heart find Him. II. **A PATIENT WAITING.** In the midst of trial and opposition we are to wait. Patience is born of storm and disaster. Tribulation worketh patience. III. **A PERSISTENT WAITING.** Patience shines in persistence more than in acquiescence. The Scotch girl's definition of patience is a true one: "Wait a bit, and dinna weary." Yet patience does not consist in taking things as they come. It is not non-resisting. God likes to be persistently inquired of. Heaven is taken by violence. Those who will not help themselves will not be helped of Heaven. IV. **AN ACTIVE WAITING.** Faith without works is dead. Prayer without works is just as dead. The sick man must use the remedy if he would get well. The business man must be fervent in business, the soldier must keep his powder dry. This applies to the work of saving souls. We must use the means within our reach, as well as trust in God. "Wait" is a large word: Take it in its full meaning, and it leaves nothing else for us to do. (*Herrick Johnson, D.D.*) *The duty of waiting*:—The Christian soldier is long in learning to wait. Marching and countermarching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. There are hours of perplexity when the willing spirit anxiously desires to serve, but knows not how. Shall it vex itself by despair? fly back in cowardice? turn aside in fear? rush forward in presumption? No; simply wait; but—I. **WAIT IN PRAYER.** Call upon God; spread the case before Him; tell Him the difficulty; plead His promises. II. **WAIT IN SIMPLICITY OF SOUL.** In dilemmas it is sweet to be humble as a child. It is sure to be well with us when we feel and know our folly, and are willing to be guided by God's will. III. **WAIT IN FAITH.** Express unwavering confidence; for unfaithful, untrusting confidence is an insult to the Lord. Believe that though He keeps us tarrying He will come at the right time and will not tarry. IV. **WAIT IN QUIET PATIENCE.** Not rebelling under the affliction, but blessing God for it; nor murmuring against second causes, as the children of Israel against Moses; nor wishing to go back to the world again; but accepting the case as it stands, and putting it simply and whole-heartedly into the hands of our covenant God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Brave waiting*:—There are two perils to which Christians are exposed; the one is that under heavy pressure they should start away from the path which they ought to pursue,—the other is lest they should grow fearful of failure, and so become faint-hearted in their holy course. Both these dangers had evidently occurred to David, and in the text he is led by the Holy Spirit to speak about them. "Do not," he seems to say, "do not think that you are mistaken in keeping to the way of faith; do not turn aside to crooked policy, do not begin to trust in an arm of flesh, but wait upon the Lord;" and, as if this were a duty in which we are doubly apt to fail, he repeats the exhortation, and makes it more emphatic the second time, "Wait, I say, on the Lord." I. **GOD IS TO BE WAITED ON.** 1. As a beggar waits for alms at the rich man's door. Beggars must not be choosers. Believingly to wait upon the Lord, pleading the all-prevailing name of Jesus, is the suppliant's best posture. 2. As learners for instruction. The pupils of the old philosophers were wont to

walk in the groves of Academia till the wise men were ready to come and speak with them; and when any one of the wise men began to speak, the young disciples quietly followed his steps, eagerly catching up every precious sentence which he might utter. Much more should it be so with us towards our Lord Jesus; let us follow Him in every page of inspiration, study every line of creation, and learn of Him in all the teachings of His providence. 3. As a servant waits upon his lord. (1) Oh, to be always waiting to do yet more and more for Jesus. I would go up and down my Master's house, seeing what I can do for His little children, whom I delight to cherish; what part of the house needs sweeping and cleaning, that I may quietly go about it; what part of the table needs to be furnished with food, that I may bring out as His steward things new and old; what there is to be done for my Master towards those who are without, and what is to be done for those already in His family. You will never be short of work if with your whole heart you wait upon the Lord. (2) Sometimes the servant will have to wait in absolute inaction, and this is not always to the taste of energetic minds. It is said that Wellington kept back the Guards at Waterloo till far into the fight, and it must, I should think, have needed much courage on their part to remain calm and quiet while cannon were roaring, and the battle raging, and the shots flying about them. They must not stir till the commander-in-chief gives the order, "Up, Guards, and at them!" then will they clear the field and utterly annihilate the foe. They were as much serving their country by lying still till the time came as they were by dashing forward when at last the word was given. Wait, then, upon your Lord in all sorts of service and patience, for this is what He would have you to do. 4. As a traveller waiting the directions of his guide, or a mariner waiting upon the pilot who takes charge of his ship. We are to wait upon God for direction in the entire voyage of life; He is at the helm, and His hand is to steer our course. 5. As a child waits upon its parent. "My father knows what I have need of, and I am sure he will give it me." 6. As a courtier waits upon his prince. Sir Walter Raleigh was wise in his generation when he took off his richly embroidered cloak to spread it over a miry place, that Queen Elizabeth's feet might not be damped; the courtier knew how to smooth his own road by caring for his queen; and thus, with unselfish motives, out of pure reverence for our Lord, let us be willing to be made as the street to be walked over if Jesus can thereby be honoured. Let us lay out for our Lord the best that we have, even to the character which is dear to us as life itself, if by so doing we may bring glory to the holy and blessed name of our Redeemer.

II. COURAGE IS TO BE MAINTAINED. "Be of good courage." Our good Lord and Master ought not to be followed by cowards. Be of good courage concerning the faith which you are exercising upon Christ. He is very good to those who seek Him. 2. Be of good courage, you who have newly found Him, to avow your faith. Wear your colours before the face of all men. 3. Be of good courage in endeavouring to spread the faith which you have received. Undertake great things for Christ. 4. Be of good courage, when you pray for others. Intercession has great influence with God. 5. Be of good courage, in making self-sacrifices for the cause of Christ. 6. If you are called to endure great affliction, sharp pain, frequent sickness; if business goes amiss, if riches take to themselves wings and fly away, if friends forsake you and foes surround you, be of good courage, for the God upon whom you wait will not forsake you. Never let it be said that a soldier of the Cross flinched in the day of battle. III. WAITING UPON GOD SUSTAINS COURAGE. You have heard of the famous giant whom Hercules could not kill, because the earth was his mother, and every time Hercules dashed him down he obtained fresh strength by touching his parent, and rose again to the fight. We are of like nature, and every time we are driven to our God, though we be dashed upon Him by defeat, we grow strong again, and our adversary's attempt is foiled. Our heart is strengthened by waiting upon God, because we thus receive a mysterious strength through the incoming of the Eternal Spirit into our souls. No man can explain this, but many of us know what it is. 2. Waiting upon the Lord has an effect upon the mind, which in the natural course of things tends to strengthen our courage; for waiting upon God makes men grow small, and dwarfs the world and all its affairs, till we see their real littleness. 3. And then it inflames the heart with love. Nothing can give us greater courage than a sincere affection for our Lord and His work. A raven was hatching her young in a tree. The woodman began to fell it, but there she sat; the blows of the axe shook the tree, but she never moved, and when it fell she was still upon her nest. Love will

make the most timid creature strong; and, oh, beloved, if you love Christ you will defy all fear, and count all hazards undergone for Him to be your joy. 4. Waiting upon the Lord breeds peace within the soul, and when a man is perfectly at rest within he cares little for trials or foes. A heart unsettled towards God is sure to be afraid of men, but when the soul waits on the Lord in glad serenity it stoops not to fear. 5. This waiting upon the Lord produces the effect of increasing our courage, because it gives us often a sight of the eternal reward, and if a man getteth a glimpse of the crown of glory, the crown of thorns will no more prick his temples. IV. EXPERIENCE PROVES THIS. The text is a summary of the entire psalm. All the rest of the verse may be compared to the figures of an account, and this closing verse is the casting up of the whole—waiting on the Lord is the path of wisdom. (*Ibid.*) "*Tarry thou the Lord's leisure*":—That is the rendering of the Prayer-book version, and it brings out the exact meaning of the word "wait," which we have interlarded and lost sight of by making it mean such things—and legitimately enough—as prayer. It just means "wait." Wait for Him as you would wait for a friend at the trysting-place who does not come. Wait for Him, and wait, and wait until He does come. We know it to be a Christian duty to be patient with our fellow-men; have we ever thought of the necessity and the duty of being patient with God? "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure." It is hard, I admit it is hard, to have this patience. Indeed, the more earnest you are, the more alive you are to the needs of the world, the more eager you are to see the Kingdom of Heaven brought in among men; and the more you do on behalf of the Kingdom, the more is the temptation to lose grip of this patience with God. "Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" are we not saying every day, and as we go out into the world and see the evil and sin of the world we say it with a more plaintive note in our voice than ever. We strain, some of us, and hurt ourselves straining to help the Kingdom of the King to prepare the way of the Lord. Some faithful Christian work may be said almost to be the fruit of faithlessness. Some make up in zeal what they lack in faith. Some rail at God for His leisure with the world and with the Church, and act as if their efforts in His cause are almost a rebuke to God.

O that His steps among the stars would quicken!

O that His ears would hear when we are dumb!

Many the hearts from which the hope shall sicken,

Many shall faint, before His Kingdom come.

Patience is the Divine method in the world. Everything in the world is wrought patiently, smoothly, softly, naturally, sweetly. The seasons come and go. The world has been brought thus far not by cataclysm but by change, by growth, not by creation, and it is so morally. The world has been brought thus far by God with groanings and travellings that cannot be uttered until now, by His own Divine method of patience. The moral education of the race has gone on, step by step and stage by stage, as men were able to bear it, and able to understand it. Think of the patience of Christ. He came for the sake of the whole world to redeem the world, and He limited Himself of His own accord to twelve humble men, and He limited Himself still further, and He went on, over and over again, teaching these twelve men, preparing that morsel of soil for the precious seed. O man that art impatient, and speakest about the smallness of thy sphere, the small ministry you have in which to serve; think how limited Christ's sphere was, and the patience with which He began the redemption of the world. That is the Divine method for the world, and for the Church, and for ourselves. (*H. Black, M.A.*) *Beggars should be willing to wait*:—One morning I noticed a tramp knocking at a house door. A kind-hearted woman lived there, and when she had opened the door and seen the beggar, she ran back into the kitchen to get him something to eat. After standing a moment, he turned and went on his way. Then she came to the door with the food in her hand and called after him. He almost missed that meal because he did not wait. Perhaps we have quite missed some great spiritual gift for which we have asked because we had not learned to "wait on the Lord." (*R. Brewin.*) *Wait for an answer to prayer*:—When I lived in Exeter an eccentric clergyman who occupied a house in the Mint passage had had placed, under the knocker of his door, the polite request, "Please don't knock unless you wait for an answer." There was a school near, and I think the boys used to give him trouble. We often give God trouble, too, when we knock at His door but do not wait for an

answer. (*R. Brewin.*) *Christian valour*:—Courage is the calm, determined pursuit of the right, notwithstanding the nature of the road, ignoring the world's flattery, despising the world's menace, disparaging the transient garland and the transient crown. Courage is simply the disposition to go right on, irrespective of the world's swords or of the world's crowns. "Be of good courage." Where shall it be exercised? Sometimes in silence. I think if we could make comparisons between one aspect of the Master's life and another, if everything in the Master's life was not superlative; if we could put some things in the positive and some in the comparative and make comparisons; and if I were to be asked to put my finger on the one place in the Master's life where the courage of the Lord shone out the most resplendently, I should put my finger on the word where it says, "And He answered him nothing." It is superlative valour. The valour of silence, when to speak might mean gain. The courage to keep a close lip, the courage to restrain a laugh when somebody has made a filthy jest. The courage to present a perfectly passive face when conversation is becoming unfair; the courage to withhold applause when applause would simply add fury to an unclean fire. That is the courage that our Master seeks—the courage sometimes to withhold the laugh. There is many a young fellow would restrain for ever from an unclean, filthy jest if he were left in the shivering experience of a quiet and passive reception. Courage in silence; courage sometimes by speech. I think nothing shows out more radiantly and more conspicuously the valour of the Apostle Paul than that experience which he describes for us in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he tells us that when he encountered Simon Peter who was destined to be a pillar of the Church, a living light in the metropolitan church, and who had gone down to Antioch, and who had played and trifled with the truth, who had worn one coat one day and another on another day, "I withstood him to the face." A thing like that is not to be received in silence. "I withstood him to the face," warned him, rebuked him, to his face. Now, suppose you could get a radiant, confident, optimistic courage, a disposition that would keep its lips still and closed when it might appear as though to open them would be immediate gain, and that would speak though speech should wreck a possible career, that would go right on disregarding on the one hand a menace, or, on the other hand, a smile—suppose you could get a disposition like that implanted into the personality of men, suppose it had become part of my constitution, part of my make up—pure, clean, clear courage, what would be the influence of it? First of all, the influence of it on myself. Would it have made any influence upon my body? I want to say that it would; I want to proclaim—and I think it is a note that is not sufficiently proclaimed, and emphatically proclaimed—that Virtue makes for physical health. I would say to any athlete here, "You would become a finer athlete if you were a finer man. Virtue ministers to health rather than vice, and courage will send your blood in a glow around your body rather than cowardice, when you are beset by the hostility of the world." It will influence the body, it will still more influence the mind. Would it influence the soul? I use the word "soul" there to describe the highest part of man's personality, the power which lays hold of and apprehends and appreciates and appropriates God. Would it affect that? There is a fine suggestive sentence in one of Emerson's essays which will serve my purpose to quote it now, "God never gives visions to cowards." Why does not God give visions to cowards? Because, my brethren, He cannot. Cowards close the doors, shut out the Divine. The light cannot enter the spirit, cannot find access when a man is timid and cowardly; all the entrances in his life are blocked. But if a man is valorous and courageous, having his eyes set on the truth and the pursuit of it, a man is porous, porous to everything that is Divine. The Divine can simply soak into him. If a man of a valorous spirit takes up a book to read, as he reads through the book all that is lovely in the book steeps into him; he is porous towards the lovely and the true. If he goes into a picture gallery, all that is wonderful and beautiful and spiritually suggestive about the pictures soaks into him; he is porous towards the lovely. God cannot give these things to cowards, because they are closed, they are non-porous. It was when Peter had become bold we are told that he had visions; it was after he had become great that he began to have visions of the ineffable glory, and when a man has set his eye upon the truth in the resolute, determined pursuit of it, then I say he is open in every door of his spirit to the entrance of the ministry of the Spirit of God, he becomes the tabernacle of the Almighty. That is how it would influence myself; how would it influence my neighbour? I am

afraid we talk a good deal about the contagion of vice—I do not think too much—but I do not think we talk half enough about the contagion of virtue. We talk a great deal about the leaven of hypocrisy, but I do not think we speak half enough about the leaven of sincerity and truth. Everybody knows that one man can impart a vice to another by simply living with him. There is a most subtle contagion which can pass almost through the mystic influence of thought, and still more by the transmission of speech, but there is a wonderful contagion of virtue, and a man in whom the valorous temperament is enthroned, might give spirit and inspiration to a crowd. Napoleon says: "There is a moment in every great war when the bravest troops feel inclined to run; it is the want of confidence in their own courage," and then Napoleon says: "The supreme art of generalship is to know just when that moment will come and to provide for it. At Arcola"—I am quoting the words exactly—"I won the battle with twenty-five horsemen. I anticipated the moment of fright and flight, and I had twenty-five men ready of cool nerve and decision, and just at the appropriate moment I turned the twenty-five into the host, and the battle was won." Twenty-five men who had not lost their nerve brought back confidence to a host who were inclined for fright and flight. The man who was cool for fight brought back the hordes that were ready for fight. Has that no analogy in the realm of the spirit? One brave member of a family may save the whole household from moral perdition; one young fellow in a warehouse may save all his mates from the timidity which means hell; one fine, brave lad in a school who will despise all meanness and set his eyes upon the true and follow it, may gain a whole form for the army of the Lord. How, then, can we get this fine, valorous disposition? "Wait on the Lord"—"Wait, I say, on the Lord." How painfully inadequate. Inadequate! There are some things in the spiritual which any man can prove in a day. There are some things which inevitably and almost immediately result from the life of the spirit which any man can put into momentary and daily proof. Here is one. Suppose that you find you are becoming possessed by the spirit of anger, and that passion is rising within you like an angry flood, and you feel as though you were about to be overcome, and the flood is going to merge in indiscreet and bitter and violent speech. Just then wait on the Lord, and in the name of God Almighty I promise you, with the most consummate assurance, that you will find your anger will there and then begin to subside, until it becomes as calm as a peaceful sea. If you find that you are becoming the victim of lust, "Wait on the Lord," and even while you kneel you shall find that the unholy fire is being put out. If you are possessed by the feeling of envy or of jealousy, and if you are being consumed by the hateful thing, "Wait on the Lord," and I promise you—and I dare you to put it to proof—that while you kneel the envy and the jealousy will pass away from your vision just as the steam passes away from our windows in the cooler light of the dawn. If I come with my spirit of timidity and cowardice into the presence of the Almighty, and say, "Lord, I have a will like a reed, I would like a will like adamant," will nothing result? Will the Lord, who says to the passion, Be still; and who says to the lust, Die out; and who says to the envy, Evaporate, have nothing to say to a timid and cowardly will? "He shall strengthen thine heart." When? Not just then, perhaps. I would like to make that clear if I may. It will be when you need, because perhaps just then, when you kneel, you may not need. (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *The temptation to discouragement*:—Among the whole legion of evil spirits that harass the Christian, there is none more mischievous than that dark-visaged demon called Discouragement. He tries to hamstring us just at the critical time when we need all our faculties and all our graces. If he can persuade us to give up, we are gone. History is never weary of telling us of those resolute spirits who would not give up—of Disraeli's reply to the jeers of the British Parliament, "The time will come when you will be glad to hear me;" and of George Stephenson and Robert Fulton persisting with their experiments in the face of ridicule. But "the children of light" are not always as wise as "the children of this world" in carrying their point. All the more shame to us, because the man of the world has no special promise of the Divine help, and the child of God has. The one has to encourage himself in his own brain-power or his "pluck," but the other may encourage himself in the Lord his God. One thing we who enlist in the service of Christ must be assured of, and that is that our campaign is for life. Regeneration does not end the fight; it is only its beginning. Our arduous work will not be done until we have gained our crown. God sees that it is not best that we should get to heaven before our

time, and so He ordains that this life shall be one of perpetual conflict, temptation, trial, discipline. One of the most frequent temptations to discouragement arises from the want of apparent success in the best undertakings. Brave Dr. Judson preached in Burmah six years without a visible convert. After these six years of subsoiling and seeding came a steady crop of conversions. (*T. J. Cuyler, D.D.*) **He shall strengthen thine heart.**—*The strengthening of the heart:*—What do we mean by the Heart? Now, just as the Will is the seat of basal, executive force, and just as the Conscience is the seat of moral instinct, so the Heart is the seat of feeling, the home of emotion, the empire of the sentiments. I wish to discuss what I may call the aristocracy of the feelings. I call them the aristocracy because they possess a certain subtlety of refinement which distinguishes them from others which are more closely and intimately related to the flesh. Like other aristocracies the members are both good and bad. Envy is a purely spiritual feeling, and may exist in all its intensity even when the vesture of the flesh has been finally dropped. Gratitude is a purely spiritual feeling, and may exist in undiminished power when the flesh has turned to dust. There are other feelings which are largely contingent upon the flesh, and which seek their gratification exclusively in the ways of the flesh. These will only indirectly concern us in the present discussion. Let us confine the attention to the more ethereal feelings—to feelings more subtle and more refined, more refined in evil and more refined in good. Now it is very evident that these feelings appear in different kinds and in varied intensity among different people. That is a very obtrusive fact in human life. If with the Divine vision we could enter into some hearts it would be like passing into a cathedral: everything is so sweet and chaste and reverent and beautiful. But if we entered into other hearts it would be like passing into a cellar: dark, damp, and forbidding, abounding in vermin and uncleanness. In some hearts the feelings lurk like carrion vultures; in others they sing and soar like the lark. Have we any responsibility as to the character of the feelings which possess the Heart? Has Conscience, the moral palate, any judgment to give concerning the things of the Heart? Is its dominion confined to the regions of thought and speech and deed, or does its jurisdiction reach to the inhabitants of the Heart? Yes, Conscience indicates some feelings, and definitely condemns them. Conscience indicates other feelings, and definitely approves them. What Conscience condemns I am commanded to remove. What Conscience approves I am commanded to entertain. But in the judgments of Conscience there is a larger implication even than this. That which Conscience commands me to remove I have power at hand to remove. Let us mark that well. Moral commandments are indications of possible moral attainments. Conscience searches my heart and commands me to turn out this feeling, and to give more room to that feeling, and to let in another that for long has been standing at the gate. And all this is a solemn indication to me that, according to the teaching of Conscience, I have power over my own Heart, and that for the exercise of this power I shall be called to account when I stand before the judgment-seat of God. Conscience, then, proclaims that we are responsible for our feelings. Do we recognize the obligation? Let us seek for evidence in our common judgments. Our common judgments recognize that men have power over their own hearts. We condemn a man for ingratitude. If we can exercise no dominion over our feelings the ungrateful man should be regarded with tenderest pity as the poor victim of a hard and petrifying fate. We praise and commend a man because of his warm and bounteous love, because of the bright and sunny influence with which he transforms our dull November seasons into merry days of June. Why should we commend him if men have no power over their own hearts? He is rather to be regarded as a very lucky man, who, by a most fortunate chance, has entered into a golden heritage, which less lucky men have been denied. But no such element of chance is allowed to enter in and shape and colour our judgments. If it were needful to give further elaboration to this it would be easy to detach fragments from our common speech which clearly indicate that in our practical life we acknowledge that men can exercise sovereignty over the empire of the Heart. For instance, we blame one man for "allowing his feelings to run away with him," we commend another for having his feelings "well under control." I do not think this truth receives sufficient emphasis when we are considering the culture of the spiritual life. We have command over the Heart. We have authority over the feelings. Whatever feeling we want we can get. Whatever feeling we do not want we can reject. If we desire the feeling of love we have means to obtain



it. If we desire the feeling of malice it will come at our bidding. How, then, are feelings created? Upon what are they dependent? They are largely, if not exclusively, dependent upon thought. Out of thought there comes feeling, just as fragrance is born of a rose, and a noisome stench of a cesspool. Our sentiments are the exhalations of our thoughts. Every thought tends to create a feeling. There are no thoughts devoid of influence. From every thought there proceeds an influence which goes to the making of a disposition. A single thought in the mind may exhale an almost imperceptible influence. But the influence is there, and steals like an intensely subtle odour into the Heart. Let the thoughts be multiplied, and the delicate odours unite to form an intensely powerful influence which we call a feeling, a sentiment, a disposition. But suppose the thought is not like a sweet rose, but like a poisonous nightshade. Here again the influence of a single thought may be too subtle for our detection, but let the thoughts be multiplied, and the poisonous exhalations will unite to form a sentiment of most destructive strength. Let us lay hold of this as a most practical principle in the culture of the spiritual life. We cannot have a good thought and not enrich the Heart. There is no chance or caprice about the matter. It is governed by immutable law. We cannot have one kind of thought to-day exhaling one kind of feeling, and the same kind of thought to-morrow exhaling another kind of feeling. No; each thought creates its own feeling, and always of one kind. There are certain thoughts which, if we will take them into our minds, will inevitably create the feeling of envy. Take other thoughts into the mind, and from them will be born the sentiment of jealousy. Take other thoughts into the mind and the Heart will speedily swell with pride. Fill the mind with another kind of thought and in the Heart will gather the sweet and tender sentiment of pity. Each thought creates its own sentiment, and we cannot help it. Some sentiments gather rapidly. They appear to attain to mature fulness in a moment. Other sentiments accumulate slowly. It often happens that the sentiment of jealousy comes to her throne only after the lapse of many years. On the other hand, anger can mount the throne and govern the life in a day. The mode of its operation is quite familiar to us. Anger is the distinct and immediate creation of thought. We bring certain thoughts into the mind, and from these thoughts there proceed certain sentiments. We think, and think, and think, and the feeling accumulates and increases with our thought, until at last the Heart is full with feeling, and explodes in violent passion. And so we counsel a man not to think about the injury which he has presumed suffered, "not to nurse it," and by our counsel we imply that with the rejection of the creative thought the created passion will subside. Let us advance one step further. Our thought creates our feelings. Our deeds react upon and strengthen the feelings which by thought were created. My thought plans a kindly deed. Well, the thought itself will most inevitably tend to create a kindly feeling, but the doing of the deed will also assuredly tend to reinforce the feeling. Our deeds react on the feelings which prompted them, and confirm and augment them. That is one way by which our God rewards His children. He rewards our mercifulness by increasing our resources of mercy. He rewards our deeds by enlarging our hearts. That is the law of our God, and the law finds application on the bad side as well as on the good. Every act of greed strengthens the feeling of avarice. Every act of impurity intensifies the feeling of lust. What, then, is the secret of the culture of the Heart? It is this—we must get back to the origin of feeling. We must get back to imaginations, to ideas, to ideals. As is the mind so will be the Heart. A stony Heart finds its explanation in the mind. A pure Heart may be interpreted in the mind. "Set your mind on things above," exhorts the Apostle Paul; "Set your mind on things above," and your feelings will soar heavenward, like white-winged angels making their way home. It is on those serene and lofty heights that a sound and healthy Heart is to be gained. It may be only a depressing revelation to a man to tell him that health can be found on the wind-swept summit. You bring him a gospel when you tell him how to get there, how means may be found even for him, however impoverished he may be. "Set your mind on things above." There is no gospel in that. I so easily move amid things that are below. Is there any gospel which offers to me a heavenly gravitation to counteract the earthly gravitation, some triumphant power which will tug me towards the things that are above, as this mighty world-power drags me down to things which are below? In this word of the Master I find the gospel I seek: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw . . ." That is the gospel we need. The power to

resist the gravitation of worldliness—to “ascend into the hill of the Lord,” to “set the mind on things above,” to think and live on the pure and heavenly heights—is to be found in a crucified and exalted Christ. Committing ourselves to Christ we shall rise with Him, and the mind will share in the resurrection. Drawn by Him we shall rise into “newness of life.” With the “renewing of the mind” we shall be “transformed”: high-born feelings will come to be our guests, and the pervading influence of these fragrant sentiments will sweeten all the common ways in which we live and move and have our being. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Divine strength*:—They that wait on the Lord, and encourage themselves to do, in the times of affliction, shall have the Lord in mercy to put strength into them, for their better enabling to wait on Him (Ps. xxxi. 24; xl. 1, 2; Isa. xl. 30). 1. Reasons—(1) To wait on the Lord, and to encourage ourselves in affliction, are notable actions of faith. Now, the grace of faith entitles us to the participation of God’s power (2 Chron. xx. 20). (2) In waiting on the Lord, and encouraging ourselves in time of affliction, are the right improving and employing of the talents which the Lord hath left with us; for in so doing we set faith a work. And this behaviour hath little to increase (Matt. xxv. 28, 29). 2. Uses—(1) For instruction. See here plainly that God’s gracious gifts and works in our hearts are vouchsafed, though not for, yet in, and upon our endeavour, in obedience to His will, in the use of those means wherein He is pleased to work the same (Isa. lv. 3; Rom. x. 17; John xi. 28). See here the true fountain of all that courage and boldness which in all ages God’s children have shown for God’s glory and for the maintenance of His truth (1 Sam. xvi. 32, 34; Ps. iii. 6; xxiii. 4; Dan. iii. 16, 17; Acts iii. 13). (2) For admonition. Observe the ways and means whereby God strengthens the hearts of His children, that so we may therein wait upon God in the day of affliction, for increase of strength, and courage in our souls. His Word spoken, either by God Himself (Joshua i. 6, 7, 9), or by His servants (Heb. xii. 12). The works of His providence, wherein we have had experience of His goodness in former deliverances (1 Sam. xvii. 34–37; Ps. xxii. 4, 5; 2 Kings ii. 14). The company of the godly (Acts xxviii. 15; Prov. xxvii. 9, 17). Prayer to God, as well by ourselves as by others in our behalf (Acts iv. 24, 29; Eph. vi. 19). God’s inward way of strengthening the heart is by the work of His Spirit (John xiv. 16; Isa. xi. 2; 2 Tim. i. 7). We must labour to be such, both in state of soul and behaviour of life, as to whom God will vouchsafe the blessing of strength of heart in evil times. That beforehand, in the days of peace, we beware of sin, and break off the cause thereof by true repentance. That we are truly in covenant with God. That by faith we rest and rely on God’s mercy in Christ Jesus. That we be upright-hearted towards God (2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xviii. 2). (*T. Pierson.*)

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### PSALM XXVIII.

VERS. 1–7. **Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my Rock.**—*The prayer of a saint in distress*:—I. HE PRAYS THAT GOD WOULD GRACIOUSLY HEAR AND ANSWER HIM NOW THAT, IN HIS DISTRESS, HE CALLED UPON HIM (vers. 1, 2). Observe—1. His faith in prayer. “O Lord, my rock.” 2. His fervency in prayer. “Unto Thee will I cry”—as one in earnest, being ready to sink unless Thou come in with seasonable succour. 3. How solicitous he is to obtain an answer. “Be not silent to me.” 4. His plea. (1) The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him. “If Thou be silent to me,” etc. If God be not my friend, appear not to me, and appear not for me, my hope and my help is perished. (2) The good hopes he had that God would favour him. “I lift up my hands,” etc. The most holy place, within the veil, is here called “the oracle.” That was a type of Christ; and it is to Him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through Him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven (Heb. ix. 24); and from God, as our Father in heaven, we are taught to expect answers to prayer. II. HE DEPRECATES THE DOOM OF WICKED PEOPLE (ver. 3). 1. Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me. 2. Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do. 3. Save me from

being involved in their doom. III. HE DEPRECATES THE JUST JUDGMENTS OF GOD UPON THE WORKERS OF INIQUITY (ver. 4). This is not the language of passion or revenge; nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But—1. Thus he would show how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity. 2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world. 3. This prayer is a prophecy that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. Observe, he foretells that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but "according to the wickedness of their endeavours"; for sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, sure He will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they endeavoured to do, though they could not compass it. IV. HE FORETELLS THEIR DESTRUCTION FOR THEIR CONTEMPT OF GOD AND HIS HAND (ver. 5). Why do men question the Being or attributes of God but because they do not duly regard His handiworks which declare His glory, and in which the invisible things of Him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without Him—nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against Him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of His which is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they "regard not the works" God has wrought for His Church, by which He has made it appear how dear it is to Him? (Isa. v. 12). (*M. Henry, D.D.*) *A cry for help*:—1. To the right person. 2. At the right time. 3. With the right motives. 4. In the right way. (*J. E. Scott.*) *The instincts of the heart*:—I. THE SENSE OF DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. How sweet it is to say unto God, "My Rock." This gives confidence in life and in death. Said a dying saint (the Rev. John Rees), "Christ in His person, Christ in the love of His heart, and Christ in the power of His arm, is the rock on which I rest; and now" (reclining his head gently on the pillow), "Death, strike." II. CRAVING FOR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. 1. God's silence deprecated as the greatest evil. 2. God's fellowship sought as the greatest good. (1) Humbly. (2) Earnestly. (3) Importunately. (4) Through faith in the mercy of God. III. CONFIDENCE IN THE ETERNAL JUSTICE OF GOD. 1. Deliverance sought from the doom of the wicked. 2. Retribution craved. IV. GRATITUDE FOR THE GOODNESS OF GOD. 1. For answered prayers. 2. For assistance in time of need. 3. For assurance of hope. V. EXULTING JOY IN THE SAVING STRENGTH OF GOD. VI. TRUST IN THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH AND BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *A supplication metaphorically expressed*:—I. The OBJECT of prayer is here given in metaphor. 1. His nature. "Rock." What so immutable, abiding? (1) Deep in the nature of every man is the desire for some object on which to settle its confidence and its love. (2) The human spirit, without a fixed centre, is like the sea—never at rest. (3) All outside the soul is unsettled and shifting as the clouds. "Riches take to themselves wings and flee away;" friends drop into the grave. The soul wants a Rock amidst this surging sea. 2. His attitude. "Silent." Even Christ on the cross exclaimed, "My God," etc. Does not this prove man's intuitive belief in the fact that fellowship with the Great Father is happiness? Whatever may be man's theoretical credenda concerning the Eternal, his primitive faith is, that happiness is attained only by close communion with Him. 3. His salvation. "Lest I be like them who go down into the pit." From what a pit does the great God deliver His people—(1) The pit of uncorrectable depravity. (2) The pit of unpardonable guilt. (3) The pit of unrelievable despair. II. The NATURE of the prayer is here given in metaphor. 1. Prayer has respect to a special manifestation of God. "Toward Thy holy oracle." What the "Mercy Seat" was to the Jew, Christ is to humanity in these last times—the Temple in which God is to be met, and where the Shekinah radiates—Emmanuel—God with us. Man in prayer requires that his Deity should appear as a local personality. 2. Prayer is the elevation of the soul to God. "I lift up my hands." The lifting up of the hands symbolizes the lifting up of the heart. (*Homilist.*) **Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down into the pit.**—*The Silences of God*:—The instinct of religion is to cry to God. The personal providence of God is the reason of prayer. The psalmist is in trouble, and as he prays his imagination suggests what it would be if God were silent to him. I. IS GOD SILENT TO OUR

PRAYERS? We pray expecting His answer. Prayer is not the mere utterance of surcharged hearts, like Lear's raving to the winds. There is moral benefit in simple desire, and that desire grows by utterance. The Rock may not speak to us, but we can lean against it and find shelter under it. But the idea of God speaking to us is as essential for prayer as our speaking to Him. We ask for response, not merely that He would listen. In what sense may God be silent to a praying man? It is a possibility, and as such it is deprecated. Perhaps David was impatient because the answer did not at once come. Sometimes the answer may follow at once, as the thunder-clap the lightning. "I will, be thou clean," was the instant answer to the leper's cry. But the answer to the Syro-Phœnician, to the centurion, to the disciples in the storm, to the sisters of Lazarus, were purposely delayed. The long winter is not a capricious delay of spring; it prepares for a fuller, a more luxuriant life. Surely was not the Father, in this sense, silent to the well-beloved Son Himself when He prayed in His agony, thrice, "Father, if it be possible." His cup might not pass, but "He was heard in that He feared." Our hasty desires are often not wise. The thing demanded might send "leanness into our souls." II. THERE ARE OTHER SILENCES THAT PERPLEX US. What is the meaning of many of God's laws—the economy of violence, of death, of death as the condition of life? Why are the secrets of Nature so hidden? Why did not God tell at the first what powerful generations have just discovered? Wherefore do the wicked prosper? Why is God silent when His people are wronged with impunity and success? No doubt, much that we call God's silence is speech that is unheard. It is not His silence, but only our deafness. Christianity has taught us how to regard suffering itself as a gospel. III. CONCERNING HIS KINGDOM WE ARE PERPLEXED. "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He is silent to our curiosity even when prompted by benevolence. IV. IN SPIRITUAL THINGS, again, we often think, in our obtuseness, that God is silent. We do not always hear God's voice in our own souls. The Babel voices of passion drown it. He that will do the will of God shall know of the doctrine. Some men see and hear God everywhere; others never see or hear Him at all. To the spiritual soul God's world is a whispering gallery—dead stones speak. V. TO SUCH A SOUL THE THOUGHT THAT GOD MAY BE SILENT TO HIM IS INTOLERABLE. He would be as those who perish. Every delay was painful. The Divine Fatherhood has such meaning to us that we cannot bear "the hiding of God's face." This is the meaning of all the great yearnings after God with which the Psalms are full. To be thrown upon the mystery and sin and trouble of life, "all the burden and the mystery of this unintelligible world," without God is, to a religious soul, intolerable. How terrible to think of men to whom God is always silent, who are spiritually so deaf that they cannot hear, and to whom, if they could hear, God has no words that He could speak but of rebuke. There are men who all their lives have been saying prayers but have never prayed, and to whom God has never spoken. What if the silence should never be broken? (*H. Allen, D.D.*) *The silence of God*:—I shall treat the subject mainly from the standpoint of those to whom the silence of God is a burden, more or less perplexing, mysterious. I. WHILE COMPLAINING OF GOD'S SILENCE, ARE YOU REALLY SO CERTAIN THAT HE IS SILENT? What if God has been speaking distinctly and repeatedly, while from faults of your own you have not heard Him? There are two pre-requisites to the catching of God's voice. 1. Listen for it in the proper quarter. Many miss the Divine message because they fail to realize how often it comes to us in the ordinary and the commonplace. "Where is the Christ?" do you ask?—"the Christ that I need to save me, to guide me?" Why, in the weekly sermons you hear, in the daily Scriptures you read, in the temporal experiences that befall you, in the spiritual aspirations that stir in you. Lay your ear to the things that are close to you: customary ordinances, customary providences, as well as your yearnings and anxieties for a better life. Christ is speaking in these. 2. Listen for it with the necessary sympathy. Otherwise, though close to the sphere where God speaks, with His messages ringing all round about you, you may miss or mistake their meaning; they will be no real messages to you. Who are those that appreciate the poet's message? Only such as have a portion of the poet's soul. Who are those that appreciate the musician's message? Only such as have a portion of the musician's taste. And who are those that appreciate the Divine message? Only such as have an element of the Divine character, that raises you to the knowledge of the Divine, instals you into fellowship with the Divine. II. IN COMPLAINING OF GOD'S SILENCE, ARE

YOU SURE THAT HIS SILENCE WILL CONTINUE? Remember the Syro-Phœnician woman. If your prayer be a prayer for simple relief, and if you are careful to ask for it in the right spirit, willing to wait for it till the right time, you need not lose heart, though Christ at the outset be silent. The speaking will surely follow. And meanwhile through the very silence Christ may work by blessing as well as by speech. He may keep you waiting for a time that faith may be strengthened, that hope may be fanned, that love may be refined, that patience may be perfected, that desire may be purified. III. IN COMPLAINING OF GOD'S SILENCE, ARE YOU SURE IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU IF HE SPOKE? (John xvi. 12). He meets many a question that goes up to Him about concealed things in life and doctrine with a shake of the head, the attitude of reticence and of reserve. And the reason is this—the knowledge of such matters is meanwhile unsafe. A modern religious writer has beautifully said that the key to God's silence on many points is to be found in the simple words, "We shall be changed," and the fact that God waits till the change takes place. IV. IN COMPLAINING OF GOD'S SILENCE, ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE NOT PROVOKING HIM TO KEEP SILENCE? How? By sin that is wilfully indulged in, or sin that is insufficiently repented of—inadequately realized and confessed (Ps. lxxvi. 18). "But," you say, "I have grieved over my iniquity." Yes, but there is grieving and grieving. Have you renounced it? Have you renounced the fruits of it? Have you gone to God with such an absence of self-justification and self-excuse as to say, "I and not another have done this thing, and against Thee and not another has this thing been done"? For if not, grieve as you may, plead as you may, be prepared for God's silence. V. IN COMPLAINING OF GOD'S SILENCE, ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE GIVING HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK? "Truly," says the psalmist, "my soul waiteth upon God." It ought rather to read, "is silent to God." A friend told me some time ago that a Christian lady startled him with a question worth the repeating. She first asked, "Do you pray?" "Yes." "And how long do you remain on your knees, after you have prayed, waiting for an answer?" "Well," he said, "it is strange; I never thought of doing that at all." We forget the duty of stillness, of quietness. We forget the duty of now and again being silent to God in the attitude of expectancy and reciprocity. (*W. A. Gray.*) *The silence of God:*—I think it was Thomas Carlyle who used those pathetic words when speaking of the Deity: "He does nothing." The world moved ever onwards; men and women struggled and loved and hated; vice lifted its head unblushingly in our streets, and dishonesty and cruelty worked havoc in the peace of the universe. And yet the God of purity and of justice never seemed to interfere. The world ran riot, and He put not forth His hand; men cried to Him for help and deliverance, and He remained for ever silent. Now, this Eternal silence has had a twofold effect upon men. In one class it has given rise to defiance; in another it has given rise to despair. The unbeliever challenges the Divine interference, and when silence is the answer to his demand he denies the power of the Eternal Spirit; the man of faith appeals to God for light and leading, and the silence nearly drives him to desperation. There is nothing more trying to the faith of men than this silence, or seeming silence, on the part of God. Does God speak to you, or is He silent? Is the silence of the universe for you ever broken by the mysterious voice of an Unseen Being? Can you with the eye of sense look at the heavens above you, and with the eye of faith pierce the eternal blue, and believe that the God who lives in the universe is a Being who has ears but heareth not, who has eyes but seeth not, who has a heart but knows nothing of the wants and needs of that broken heart of yours? If prayer does nothing else for a man, it at least bears him up on the wings of faith, far from the vexing trifles of the present into the unknown region where the Father dwells; and no one can live for a moment in that holy place without hearing the voice of God. "Prayer purifies," says Richter; and purity is the voice of God. Again, we may hear the Divine voice in Nature if we open our ears to its sound. That voice was for ever in the ears of the psalmist; he heard the voice of God in the hurricane and in the calm. And the reason why men to-day do not hear God speaking to them in Nature is simply that they allow the murmur of the world to stifle the whisper of heaven. To hold silent communings with the silent God you must leave the bustle of the world behind you. It is not often that God speaks to a man through the noise of his hammer in the workshop, or the columns of his ledger in the office, or the pages of his bank-book. Leave these things behind and go away and seek God's face in the lonely valley or on the silent

hillsides. There you will discover the truest part of your manhood, you will see that the life of thought is the nearest akin to that of God, and in every blade of grass you will see the mystery of the Divine workmanship, in every peeping flower you will see the Eternal smile, in the murmur of the mountain streamlet you will hear the music of the angels, in the breeze which kisses your cheek you will feel the breath of God. We hear the voice of God also in the voice of conscience within us. If you stifle that voice it will become fainter day by day till it altogether dies away; if you listen to its appeal it will ultimately lead you to where you may see God face to face. Once more, the voice of God may come to you in the memory of the past. Your life must have been a very uneventful one if you cannot look back upon it and see many stages plainly marked which give the lie to the assertion of the silence of God, if you cannot point to many struggles, many victories, and also many defeats in your life's history where you heard the voice of God breaking the silence around. But, above all, do we hear the voice of God in the memory of departed friends and comrades. There is a great deal more meaning than we think of in the words, "He being dead yet speaketh." The memory of the departed lifts us up to higher things, and we hear their voices calling us to walk nobly and endure manfully. The memory of a dead parent often keeps a young man's feet from walking in the paths of sin; the memory of a dead friend stimulates us to a higher ideal and a nobler end. What man who has a dear child in the eternal kingdom does not feel better and purer and more Christ-like when he thinks of that angel face smiling upon him in tender affection? (*A. Warr, M.A.*) *The seeming silence of God*:—The seeming silence of God means human incapacity and dulness. This is the obstacle to hearing. There is an eternal reality corresponding with the ancient phrase, "Communion with God." But this implies more than the existence of the Heavenly voice. It implies organs made sensitive to it. The material world is full of sounds which are constantly falling upon ears that are too dull or too deaf to hear them. We speak of the silence of the sea, of the silence of the night, of the silence of the mighty mountain. But to men with ears, to men not wanting in "the vision and the faculty divine," these things are unceasingly eloquent with speech. To some God does not seem to speak because there has been no preparation for hearing. Where the soul is filled with the noise of mundane voices, the Divine voices which are resounding through its chambers cannot be distinguished. The man who cries despairingly to God, "Be not silent to me," needs to remember that it is himself more than God that needs to be stirred. He must set himself to understand the language in which the Divine One is wont to communicate with the human spirit. Even among men the spoken and the written word are not the only methods of intercommunication. To the trained eye of friendship many an important message may be conveyed without the use of any audible or written word. We speak to God in a voice audible, but He may answer us in impressions, in impulses, and similar. And this language, the language of the spirit of the unseen God, cannot be understood without any instruction. The one who rushes into the Divine presence with petitions, his soul full of earth's voices, having never learned even the alphabet of the spiritual world, cannot expect to understand the answer he may receive, any more than a man ignorant of the telegraph code could interpret the dots and dashes which he is given to understand are the reply to a communication which he has flashed along the speaking wires. To the aspiring, sensitive soul, God is never silent. (*J. Hunter, D.D.*)

**Ver. 9. Draw me not away with the wicked.**—*A prayer against identification with ungodly men*:—I. The CHARACTER of ungodly society. 1. Apostates—gone away from truth, virtue, God. 2. Rebels—wrong in relation to their own nature, society, God. 3. Hypocrites. II. The ATTRACTIVENESS of ungodly society. 1. In its numerical force. As the little spring from the mountain is drawn to the river, individuals are drawn to the multitude. 2. In its social resources. It has the prizes of fortune and the delights of pleasure at its disposal. All this is attractive. Why should these things be attractive to a good man? Simply, because his goodness is not perfect; remnants of depravity are still in his heart, and these incline him thitherward. To a thoroughly pure soul the power of ungodly society is repulsion, not attraction. III. The BANEFULNESS of ungodly society. 1. Detrimental to the higher interests of human nature. It cannot appease a guilty conscience, or cleanse a polluted heart. 2. Doomed to ruin. (1) By the moral constitution of the universe. (2) By the express Word of God,

(*Homilist.*) *Unhook from wicked men*:—A guard's van, attached to some loaded coal trucks, was shunted down an incline towards a siding. On the way, the guard was dismayed to find that the brake in his van was not able to lessen the speed at which they were going. He and his companion mounted the next truck, and tried to let down the brake there, but found that impossible. The guard then proposed to jump off, but his companion thought that that would be certain death. "I know what to do!" the guard exclaimed, and he seized a huge coal hammer which lay on the truck, went back to the van, and, smashing through the end, he unhooked the couplings. The van soon stopped, and the two men saw the rest of the train run at great speed into the siding, and the trucks dashed into a shapeless mass. So with bad companions. Unless you throw them off and have nought to do with them they will carry you to the same destruction to which they themselves are hastening.

Vers. 4, 5. **Give them according to their deeds.**—*Saints desire God to punish sinners*.—I. WHY IMPENITENT SINNERS DESERVE TO BE PUNISHED. Their wickedness lies in their endeavours, or intentions, to do evil. All their free, voluntary exercises are entirely selfish and criminal, for which they deserve to be punished. II. SOME SINNERS MORE DESERVE TO BE PUNISHED THAN OTHERS. One may design to take away a man's property, another may design to take away a man's life, and another may design to destroy a nation. These are all bad designs; but the second is worse than the first, and the third is worse than the second. Ill desert is always in proportion to the ill design of the agent; and the ill design of the agent is always in proportion to the magnitude of the evil he designs to do. III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GOD'S PUNISHING FINALLY IMPENITENT SINNERS ACCORDING TO THEIR DESERTS. 1. According to the duration of their deserts, i. e. for ever. 2. According to the degrees of their guilt. Christ expressly declares that it shall be more intolerable for some sinners than for others in the day of judgment. IV. WHY GOOD MEN DESIRE THAT GOD WOULD PUNISH THE FINALLY IMPENITENT ACCORDING TO THEIR DESERTS. 1. It is the nature of true benevolence to love justice. 2. It is the nature of true love to God to desire that He may be glorified for ever. 3. To promote the highest good of the universe. Conclusion: 1. If the ill desert of sinners essentially and necessarily consists in their free, voluntary design to do evil, then neither the foreknowledge, nor purpose, nor agency of God can ever afford them the least ground or reason to complain of Him for punishing them for ever. 2. If good men, for good reasons, desire God would punish the finally impenitent according to their deserts, then they are prepared to rejoice when they shall see Him display the glory of His justice in their future and eternal punishment. 3. If good men desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, for the reasons that have been mentioned, then sinners will never have any just ground to reproach or complain of them for feeling and expressing such a desire. 4. If good men desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, then they have no more reason to disbelieve and oppose the doctrine of reprobation than the doctrine of election. 5. If guilt or ill desert consists in the evil intentions of the heart, then there is a wide difference between awakenings and convictions. Sinners are commonly awakened before they are convinced. It is one thing to be sensible of danger, another thing to be sensible of guilt. 6. If guilt or ill desert consists in the selfish and sinful affections of the heart, then we may see why moral sinners commonly experience the deepest convictions before they are converted. They are not so easily awakened and alarmed as more open and profligate sinners. 7. Since all guilt or ill desert consists in the evil affections of the heart, it is easy to see why good men have been so much borne down with the burden of sin. Job, David, and Paul had a deep and habitual sense of their great criminality and guilt. The reason was, they had experienced keen convictions of conscience before they were converted; and this made their conscience always tender afterwards. (N. Emmons, D.D.)

Vers. 6-8. **Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard.**—*A thanksgiving truly inspired*:—These verses throw light upon the religious experience of the psalmist, and from them we learn—I. That his experience TESTIFIED OF ANSWERS TO HIS PRAYER. There are two ways in which God answers prayer—1. Sometimes by granting the thing sought. Thus the prayers of Elijah, Moses, Hezekiah, were often answered, and thus the prayers of His people, in all ages, have sometimes been answered. 2. Sometimes by endowing the suppliant with the spirit

of resignation to the Divine will. This is the most general, and the most efficient way. Acquiescence in the Divine will is the highest strength and happiness of moral beings. II. That his experience ASSURED HIM OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE. 1. Strength. What is the highest strength? Moral strength, strength arising from an unbounded confidence in God; strength to brave perils with a fearless heart; strength to endure trials without repining; strength "to labour and to wait." 2. Shield. Jehovah was his protector. No weapons can penetrate Omnipotence. He is the All-sufficient Guardian of His people; "under them are His everlasting arms." III. That his experience INVOLVED A CONSCIOUS TRUST IN JEHOVAH. "My heart trusted in Him." This is something more than to believe in His existence, His government, His claims, His Word; it is to exercise unbounded confidence in Him, in His character and procedure, in both His ability and disposition to help us. Because David trusted in Him, he said, "I am helped." There is no help for the soul without this trust in God. IV. That his experience WAS IDENTIFIED WITH EXULTANT GRATITUDE. "Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth." True religion is happiness; happiness was the end of Christ's interposition. "These things have I spoken unto you, that your joy might be full." There is no genuine religion where there is no happiness. (*Homilist.*) A glorious answer.—1. Immediately given. 2. Gratefully received. 3. Rejoicingly acknowledged. (*J. E. Scott.*) The fact of answered prayer demonstrated.—That God hears prayer is abundantly proved in the experience of George Müller and his successor in the management of his great orphanages. He made vast plans, requiring an annual expenditure of £46,000. He never went into debt. He had not a penny of assured income. And yet his orphans never went hungry to bed. He reckoned some 30,000 direct and wonderful answers to prayers received on the very day of his asking. He never made a request of man, but he received in this way of private prayer more than £800,000 to carry on his vast undertakings. Mr. W. T. Stead considers George Müller's life to be a triumphant scientific experiment regarding the power of prayer. (*A. R. Wells.*)

Ver. 7. **The Lord is my strength and my shield.**—A sacred solo:—Note in the three sentences there is in each that which is inward and that which is outward. "The Lord is my strength"—that is inward; "My shield"—that is outward. "My heart trusted in Him"—inward; "I am helped"—outward. "My heart greatly rejoiceth"—inward; "With my song will I praise Him"—outward. It teaches us that truth and beauty of form are to be linked together: to be holy we need not to be uncouth. Slovenly preaching, doggerel verses and discordant singing are to be avoided in our worship. I. We have here A SURE POSSESSION. With double grip the psalmist takes hold of God. "The Lord is my strength and my shield." It is not anything belonging to the Lord, but the Lord Himself that he thus lays hold on. He also can say this has a large inheritance which death cannot wither, nor space compass, nor time limit, nor eternity explore. He may be short in pocket money, as owners of large estates sometimes are; but he is infinitely rich, for he hath real property and an indefeasible title to it. Notice how God is laid hold of—1. Inwardly, as his strength. You cannot tell how strong you are if you can say this: what marvellous capacity for endurance. Increase of burden is nothing to groan at if there be increase of strength. And with this we can, also, do anything. Then—2. There is the outward manifestation. God is our "shield." "Where would you hide yourself," said one to Luther, "if the Elector of Saxony should withdraw his protection?" He smiled and said, "I put no trust in the Prince of Saxony. Beneath the broad shield of Heaven I stand secure against Pope and Turk and devil." So he did, so do we. And many of us can attest this. II. A DEFINITE EXPERIENCE. "My heart trusted in Him and I am helped." He does not say, "I trusted" as one who makes a profession with his lips, but "my heart trusted." Happy the man who in his "heart" trusts. Did you ever notice the middle verse of the whole Bible? It is Ps. cxviii. 8. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." The comparison will not bear a thought, the preference is infinite. May the heart always trust, and in God alone. Then we have the outward manifestation of the inward experience, "I am helped." Not "I was," nor "I shall be," but "I am." Old Master Trapp says, faith has no tenses, because faith deals with a God whose name is "I am." With man we trust and are often disappointed or deceived, but never so with God. III. A DECLARED



EMOTION. "Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song," etc. Some people's rejoicing is but skin deep. They laugh: their face is surfaced over with smiles, and their mirth bubbles up with silly glee. Nothing is more sad. You may perhaps have heard of Carlini, one of the most celebrated clowns of the beginning of this century, a man whose wit and humour kept all Paris in roars of laughter; but he himself had little share of the cheerfulness he simulated so well and stimulated so much. His comedies brought him no comfort; he was a victim of habitual despondency. He consulted a physician, who gave him some medicine, but advised him by way of recreation to go and hear Carlini. "If he does not fetch the blues out of you nobody will." "Alas, sir," said he, "I am Carlini." And so often men make mirth for others, but live in gloom themselves. Not so the man who has laid hold on God. "My heart greatly rejoiceth." And we should tell out our joy. "With my song will I praise Him." Hard-worked mothers, toiling labourers, wearied servants, sing praise unto Him. The birds, the flowers, the many-tinted shells in depth of ocean, all praise Him. Do you the same. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Lord acknowledged and praised:—I. THE LORD ACKNOWLEDGED.* 1. As the source of strength. (1) Physical. (2) Intellectual. (3) Spiritual. 2. As a shield. (1) Against temptation. (2) Against the fiery darts of Satan. (3) Against the attacks of personal enemies. II. *THE LORD TRUSTED.* 1. With the heart. 2. For the salvation of the soul. 3. For the power to keep from falling. 4. For help in every hour of need. III. *THE LORD REJOICED IN.* 1. Because the soul is at peace with God. 2. Because of the consciousness of security in God. 3. Because of the manifested presence of God in the soul. IV. *THE LORD PRAISED.* 1. For the manifestation of His power. (1) To give strength in the hour of weakness. (2) To give encouragement in the hour of despondency. (3) To give light in the hour of darkness. (4) To give inspiration in the hour of conflict. 2. For the manifestation of His love. (1) In cleansing the heart from all sin. (2) In inscribing the name in heaven. (3) In the adoption of sons into the Divine family. (4) In the blessed assurance of an eternal home in heaven. (G. T. Adams.) *The security of those who have God for their strength and shield:—*He is invulnerable whom God shields. The devil might spare his arrows, for not one of them will take effect on him whom God shields. David rested in his God in the midst of trouble, for God was a shield unto him. Oh, man, what about your fortifications? The French, yonder in Paris, put out statements and bulletins about the state of the fortifications—about the condition of the chain of forts that encircle their city. Now, as you walk around the walls of your own soul, have you got God as a shield? You, young fellow, are you shielded by God? Is God your shield? Have you covenanted with Jehovah? If you have, then—oh, hear it!—you are safe, for "the Lord is thy shield." (J. Robertson.)

Ver. 8. **My heart trusted in Him; and I am helped.**—*The earlier and the later song:—*There are two actions of the heart—prophecy and memory. In the morning of life I look forward, "my heart trusted"; in the afternoon I look back, "my heart rejoiceth." The morning trust comes before help; it is the prospect of the West seen from the crimson dawn. The afternoon joy follows help: it is the memory of the East seen from the setting sun. My heart is like the migration of the swallows. Every swallow makes its first migration in faith; but at the second its prophecy is turned into a memory. It is no more the heart trusting, but the heart rejoicing. My soul, which of thy migrations is the nobler? Is it the trusting or the rejoicing, the prophecy or the memory, thy journey from East to West, or thy travelling from West to East? The psalmist prefers thy evening song—the song of memory. It is the swallow after migration. It is a song in spite of storm. It is a praise of life as it is. Faith may sing of the rose behind the thorn; but love sits upon the rose bush and smiles back upon the thorn. Faith journeys from Egypt to seek the promised land; love rests in the promised land, and blesses the journey from Egypt. Faith vows all worship if it shall come without pain to the Father's house; love reposes in the Father's house and says: "It was good for me to have been afflicted." The song of memory is a song of praise. (G. Matheson, D.D.)

Ver. 9. **Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance; feed them also and lift them up for ever.**—*A prayer for the Church militant:—*Here are four choice blessings. I. **SAVE THY PEOPLE.** This prayer may refer—1. To their conversion.

2. Their sanctification. 3. Their recovery from backsliding. 4. Their deliverance from temptation. 5. The need of the whole church. If we pray this prayer we must try and save souls. II. **BLESS THINE INHERITANCE.** After men are saved they have still many wants: such as—1. Greater unity in the Church. 2. More earnestness. 3. More happiness. When we pray this prayer select some out of God's inheritance and pray especially for them. And take care practically to prove the sincerity of your prayer. III. **FEED THEM ALSO.** Hence pray—1. For ministers to be provided. 2. A clear insight into God's truth. 3. Invoke communion with Christ. And here, also, see that we practically carry out this prayer. IV. **LIFT THEM UP FOR EVER.** God's people want lifting up, they are heavy by nature. They need it—1. In character. 2. When in conflict; and—3. At the last, that we may get home to be with God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *An intercession sublimely catholic:*—This short prayer contains a sketch of the blessedness of the good—here called God's people and His inheritance. I. **DELIVERANCE.** "Save Thy people." They are in danger. From what must men be delivered in order to be made happy? Sin. This is the great enemy. 1. Man must be delivered from its guilt. Sin resting on the conscience is the thunder-cloud of hell; this cloud must be "blotted out." 2. Man must be delivered from its dominion. Man under the control of sin must be miserable. He has eternal battling with self, the universe, and God. 3. Man must be delivered from its consequences—remorse, despair, etc. From all this man must be saved, and the salvation can only be accomplished through Jesus Christ. II. **GUARDIANSHIP.** "Feed them also," that is, "take care of them." Be to them what the faithful shepherd is to the sheep. 1. Ward off the enemy. Keep the lion and the wolf at a distance. 2. Restrain from dangers. Let not the flock fall over precipices, or go into bewildering thickets. 3. Supply with provisions. Lead them into "green pastures." All this the Great Shepherd of souls does for His flock. III. **SUSTENTATION.** "Lift them up for ever." Deal tenderly with them, as the shepherd with the weaklings of his flock. It is said of Christ that "He shall lead His people like a flock," etc. (*Homilist.*) *A benevolent prayer:*—1. For salvation. 2. For blessing. 3. For a Shepherd's care. (*J. E. Scott.*) *The secret source of the saints' supplies:*—An old Scotch baron was attacked by his enemy, who encamped before his gates, and would allow no provisions to enter them. He continued the siege long enough to have exhausted the supplies within, but there were no signs of capitulation. Weeks and months passed away, and yet no surrender. After a long time the besieger was surprised, one morning, to see a long line of fish, fresh from the sea, hung over the wall, as much as to say, "We can feed you; and surely you cannot starve us out so long as there are fish in the sea, for we have an underground connection with it, and the supply is exhaustless!" So Satan may besiege our gates, but he can never compel us to surrender, for our food comes, not through the gates, but from above, and through channels invisible to his eye, the supply of which is inexhaustible.

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#### PSALM XXIX.

**VERS. 1-11. Give unto the Lord glory and strength.**—*The glory of God's government in the natural world:*—This psalm has been explained, but without sufficient reason, as telling of the power and progress of the Gospel in the latter days. But it is intended to represent the majesty of God, the aids we may expect from Him, and the homage we ought to render to Him. It begins with a summons to the chiefs of the nations, especially the chiefs of Israel, to "give unto the Lord glory and strength," that is, the glory of all their victories; and to do this in the holy sanctuary—worship and praise Him there. There comes the description of the thunder which is declared to be the voice of God, as it rolls and resounds through the vast expanse on high. Beneath its deep-toned peals and reverberations, all living nature shrinks and trembles. It "breaketh the cedars"; the thunderbolt which in a moment rends and shatters the strongest trees, such as were the cedars; or the tempest, which overwhelms and lays them prostrate in a

moment. The earthquake is next described. "He maketh Lebanon and Sirion also to skip like a calf." That is, the Mamir mountains are shaken and made, as it were, to dance, so that the cedars whirl as the plaything of a child. Not the thunder or the tempest would accomplish this, but the earthquake, which shakes the solid fabric of the globe, and tells so emphatically of the majesty and power of God. The lightning blaze is told of next. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire, bidding them either shine under the whole heaven, or retire into its chamber, so that all becomes dark again. He gives to the coruscations of the lightning its beautiful forms and tints, or causes it to descend from the sky in one continuous stream. The wondrous accompaniments of the giving of the law at Sinai—the wilderness of Kadesh—are referred to next (Ps. lxxviii. 7-8). The last circumstance introduced seems to be derived from the effect of all. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." In their terror the pains of parturition come upon them prematurely, and the hurricane makes bare the forests, penetrates their thick array, discloses their dark recesses, strips and scatters their leaves, and lays their twining honours low. The beasts of prey are driven forth from their hiding-places, and their covert is concealed no longer. But over all this wild war, as it seems, God rules, and from all receives homage, and His power is for His people. (*John Mitchell, D.D.*)

**Ver. 2. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**—*The worship of holiness*:—Worship meant at first worth-ship, or the condition of being worthy, as friendship is the condition of being friendly. The best worship is not merely to thank God for what He has done for us, but to show ourselves worthy of this. It is very clear that this is the best kind of worship for us; for it results not in mere words, but in character. We are better for our religion, which cannot always be said of the outward kind; and surely it must be more acceptable to God. You would rather have your boy thank you for what you give him, and recognize your kindness, than not. But you would rather even than this have him use what you give him wisely. As between the boy who thanked you very profusely, and even sincerely, and then spent your money in some degrading way, and the boy who took your money carelessly and without a word, but spent it in a way that made you proud of him, you would surely choose the latter. But what is it that makes us worthy? It is "the beauty of holiness." And what is holiness? Here we have another word that has lost its first and best meaning. Our dictionary tells us that "holy" is the same word, essentially, as *heal*, *hale*, *whole*. A man is physically holy when he is healed, or in health, when he is hale, when he is whole. Holiness is wholeness. No man is holy who is not a whole man; and, to be a whole man, he must care for his body as well as for his soul. "What we shall be it doth not yet appear;" but it is very certain that while we are here, the body is part of the man. Holiness is wholeness; and wholeness means a sound body and a sound soul together. But it means more than that: it means sound judgment, common sense. Good people are the salt of the earth. But it is possible to have too much salt in proportion to your porridge. It would be hard to say that anybody is too good; but it is very certain that many a man's goodness would be worth a great deal more if only he had a little practical judgment to direct it. The world needs its dreamers, its men and women of enthusiasm and ideals; but it needs also the calm, steady balance and ballast of the men and women of common sense. There are other things that one needs to be a whole man, as a warm heart and a strong will, without which he does not fulfil the Divine ideal, and so does not render back the worship that God loves. These are enough to show what is meant, so far, by the worship of wholeness. But we have yet to see that mere individual wholeness is not possible unless the individual recognizes larger wholes than himself, of which he is a part. In the first place, in so far as a man is a body, he is a part of the great whole of matter, or the universe. The man who does not realize that he is so far a part of the world cannot be a whole, cannot be holy. The farmer must put his work into line with the material laws of soil and season; the engineer must put his work into line with the laws of steam, and the physician with the laws of the human frame. If either tries to do otherwise, to set up a world of his own invention or imagination, the great universe calmly sweeps over it and him, as the sea sweeps over the child's house of sand on the beach. Let a man in any way separate himself from this great universe, and he suffers. As a man faints when he shuts himself into a room, away from the atmosphere that clothes the world, so he faints if he shut himself

into his own life and interests. Just as the value of his land grows, though he may do absolutely nothing to it himself, simply because other people come and settle near him, and make a city about him, so his life grows, though he may not try to cultivate it at all, simply because other people are about him, and with him day by day. There are things that a man can do better in solitude than in society. There are necessities that sometimes drive individuals away from their fellows. There are circumstances that sometimes compel men and women to live destitute of the companionship which makes life rich and deep for others. But, though there may be a gain on one side, there is loss on others. There is about the recluse something less than human. The great currents of thought and emotion that sweep through society and keep hearts and minds fresh, as the breezes keep the air fresh, are lost by the recluse. It is a great mistake for those who are in grief or misfortune to shut themselves away either from the fresh air of nature or the fresh air of human companionship. Health is wholeness with nature and with man. To-day, human sympathies are broadening out with the spread of commerce; and, as it slowly dawns upon us that the good of the world is the good of every nation, so into our hearts comes a thrill of pity and desire to help, when we hear of the suffering of any part of this variegated human race. This is the beauty of holiness that is the best worship. In old days, when the sacrifice was not of the soul, but of the body, it was counted an unworthy thing to bring to the altar of God a bullock that had spot or blemish. To-day, it is not a one-sided any more than a stained manhood that makes a man worthy of the Divine love. It must be a whole man, body, mind, heart, will, and soul, all rounded and complete, at one with the world of nature and the world of man,—that is the acceptable offering. (*W. H. Lyon*). *In holy attire*:—Do we really worship God? I. We worship God in the beauty of holiness when worship is characterized by REALITY. We should act with the same propriety, feel as much awe, dread of vulgarity, entering the old meeting house, as into the court and presence of an earthly king. As much? Yea, how much more! II. We worship God in the beauty of holiness when our worship is characterized by RECOLLECTION. Let the soul withdraw its faculties from men and time and affairs, come face to face with God and His righteousness, His truth, and His love. Bring by the process of recollection, as Miss Havergal says, your sins for cleansing, your uninterpretable heart, the cares from which you cannot flee, griefs you cannot utter, the joys of love, and the life you would no longer know as your own. III. We worship God in the beauty of holiness when our worship is characterized by RECEPTIVITY. The open souls are not sent empty away. IV. We worship God in the beauty of holiness when our worship is characterized by RESPONSIVENESS. I mean, carrying the ideals, impressions, determinations of the sanctuary back into the world and allowing them to mould our temper, habits and sentiments in the labours and recreations of life. If worship be true, character shall grow in strength and gentleness, and influences shall stream from us, bearing no tardy fruits, to our fellow-men. (*D. B. Williams*.)

Vers. 3, 4. **The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.**—*The voice of Jehovah upon the waters*:—The very pathway of the Lord's people is said to be "through the waters"; and they are a people "that do business in deep waters." How Israel, how Peter, found the truth of our text. But when passing through deep waters we are more inclined—and it is a crying evil—to listen to the roar of the waves than to the voice of my precious Christ. I. AFFLICTIONS ARE COMPARED TO "WATERS," "billows," "deep waters." And these may come upon the Church at large through hatred of the truth by Papists, Arminians and Socinians and others. And upon private persons, through temporal trials and persecutions. But these are other waters, blessed ones, such as told of in Ezek. xlvii. II. **THE LORD'S VOICE ON THESE WATERS.** It is an overruling and comforting voice, in waters of affliction: of conviction, comfort and direction, in the waters of the sanctuary. III. **THE ATTENTION DEMANDED TO SUCH A VOICE.** Listen for it more than to any other whether persecutor or preacher. Supernatural joy comes from listening to the Lord's voice. Have you all heard it? If not, may it awaken you now. (*Joseph Irons*.) **The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.**—*The majestic voice*:—All God's works praise Him, but there are some which praise Him more than others. There are some of His doings upon which there seems to be graven in larger letters than usual the name of God. Such as the lofty mountains, the thunders and lightnings. The old and universal belief was, that the thunder was the voice of God. But there are spiritual voices of God, and of these we would speak. Samuel

on his bed heard it. Saul at his conversion. And God often speaks to man by the Holy Spirit. And the voice of God is ever full of majesty. It is so—**I. ESSENTIALLY**; it must be so. Think whose voice it is. How God's voice is full of majesty because—**1.** It is true. **2.** Commanding. **3.** Very powerful. "Let there be light, and there was light." **4.** And because God's voice is His Word, and His Word was His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. **II. ALWAYS.** God's voice, like man's, has various tones, but it is always full of majesty. **1.** Let the tone be what it may, whether harsh as in threatening, or sweet as when consoling, or august as when commanding. "Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." And at the Resurrection of the dead, and at the Judgment Day. **2.** And in all the different degrees of its loudness. Some calls of God are loud, others gentle but all majestic. **3.** And in all its mediums. The meanness of a speaker for God does not hinder this. **III. IN ITS EFFECTS.** **1.** It is a breaking voice. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." The proudest and most stubborn sinner is broken before Him. **2.** Moving. "He maketh them (the mountains) also to skip like a calf." No mountain of error, falsity, or sin can stand unmoved when He speaks. **3.** Dividing. "Divideth the flames of fire." Where God's Word is faithfully preached it is ever a dividing power. **4.** Shaking—"shaketh the wilderness." God's Word does this in men's hearts. **5.** Bringing forth—"maketh the hinds to calve." So God's Word makes the soul bring forth holy desire and joy, and whatever a man has in him it has to come forth. **6.** Discovering—"discovereth the forests." Hypocrites hide, but God discovers them. Oh, listen to His voice bidding you believe and be saved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The Voice of the Lord:*—This sacred poem from which our text is taken, is one of the most elevated and sublime to which the poetry of inspiration itself has given birth. But the words are capable of other than their primary application.

**I. CONSIDER THE MODES IN WHICH GOD SPEAKS TO MAN.** **1.** Through Nature—see this psalm. **2.** Through the dispensations and in the government of Providence. **3.** Through His revealed truth, and—**4.** chief of all, through His Son. **II. THE ATTRIBUTES BY WHICH THESE COMMUNICATIONS ARE PROMINENTLY DISTINGUISHED—**Power and Majesty. Consider—**1.** The glory of His nature from whom they proceed. **2.** The contents of the communications themselves. They speak of the Divine perfections and chiefly of God's method of redeeming sinful man. **3.** The issues in which attention to, or neglect of, these communications is to terminate. They are identified with the destinies of man's deathless soul. **III. THE TRIBUTE WHICH THESE COMMUNICATIONS MADE BY GOD TO MAN IMPERATIVELY REQUIRE.** **1.** Faith. **2.** Gratitude. **3.** Prayer for ourselves and for our fellow-men. How, then, shall you who are despising these communications of God answer it in the great day of Judgment? Oh, come to Jesus now. (*James Parsons.*)

**Ver. 9. In His temple doth every one speak of His glory.**—*Nature's shout of praise:*—"In His temple everything saith Glory!" The temple of which the psalmist here speaks is the temple of Nature. He believed that every object in the visible universe was engaged in singing pæans of praise to its Creator—"fire and hail." Too many of us lack almost entirely this sixth sense, "the vision and the faculty divine;" we hear scarce a whisper of this great shout of praise that goes up from all creation. But in what sense does everything in Nature cry, Glory! In what sense does the material universe sing the praises of God? It does so, I doubt not, directly. For God's pleasure all things are and were created, and doubtless the incense which arises from Nature's altars, the songs which are chanted in her leafy aisles, the perfume of her flowers, the beauty of her landscapes, are as grateful to the Creator as man's acts of worship. "The trees clap their hands, and the little hills rejoice together before the Lord." But there is another sense in which natural objects praise God, and it is this we shall meditate upon; they awaken gratitude in the heart of man and thus transmute themselves into conscious praise. Man's soul is the great organ upon which Nature plays her anthems of praise; the five senses are the keys; and through the medium of this instrument every created thing in God's Temple crieth, Glory! **I. NATURE INCITES MAN TO PRAISE BY HER BEAUTY.** Think of one or two of those myriad appeals to our admiration which Nature makes, and which, for the most part, go unregarded. **1.** Reflect how God's glory reacheth unto the clouds. The clouds, perhaps more than all other objects in Nature, teach us the immanence of God, teach us how His presence may penetrate and transfigure even what is most commonplace and familiar. For what are clouds? When they rest on the surface of the

earth they are just choking fogs and clinging mists disfiguring everything they touch. But raise them away into the purer strata of the air to which they rightly belong; let the wind churn them into flakes of snow, and the moon pierce them with its silver arrows; and the sun suffuse them with its golden ardours; let them become the womb of the lightning and the chariot of the storm—and they present such visions of glory as can be seen nowhere else. Thus God would teach us that evil is but good in its wrong place, and that the fogs and mists of earth's sins and sorrows are the substance out of which God will weave hereafter golden visions of ethereal beauty. 2. Think what praise we owe God for the loveliness of all watery forms with which He has robed and adorned the earth, and of which clouds are but a part. The brooklet seeks the river, and the river empties itself into the sea, and the sea sends aloft its multitude of clouds, and the clouds form themselves anew on the face of the earth. That which is part of a stagnant ditch to-day may be a radiant dewdrop to-morrow, and what is now a peaceful pool may anon be a part of the stormy ocean which writhes its white fingers in the shrouds of sinking ships. But whether in forms of sublimity or of tenderness, how varied is its loveliness, and how varied are the notes of praise it should educe from man. Think of it as the iceberg and the glacier; as the snow that robes the mountain, and the hoar-frost that bejewels the branches; as the foam ball upon the torrent and the dewdrop on the rose; as the cataract spanned by the rainbow, and the crystal pool, the mirror of the woods! And then, perceiving how beautiful these things are in themselves, and what a throb of gratitude they awaken in the heart of him who feels their beauty, you will be impelled to link the gratitude of conscious and unconscious nature together, and to cry with the psalmist, "All Thy works praise Thee, O God, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee." 3. Whether we gaze downward at our feet, where God has covered the earth with a carpet of emerald, and embroidered it with flowers, and, lest we should weary of their colours, has decreed that they shall bloom and fade, and be succeeded by others, month by month, and season by season; or visit those mountain regions which are, as an eminent writer has said, "the great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars"; whether it be the lichen which softens the scarred ruin or the forest which clothes a mountain side which engages our attention; the insect which flutters its hour of sunshine and is gone, or the star whose light takes a thousand years to bridge the space between it and us—alike, if we have indeed ears to hear, shall we be impelled to confess that everything in God's temple crieth, "Glory!"—alike we shall declare with the psalmist, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works, and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operation of Thy hands." II. NATURE INCITES US TO PRAISE BY HER BOUNTY. The beauty of those natural objects of which I have spoken appeals to our higher nature, but our lower nature also needs ministering to. "Man shall not live by bread alone," but without bread he cannot live at all. And, therefore, Nature awakens our gratitude by her material as well as her spiritual gifts. The clouds not only delight the eye; they are, as a psalmist calls them, "the river of God," and rain plenteousness on the earth. The flowers of the field do not merely charm us by their loveliness, they yield up to us their colours and their perfumes; they serve us with their seeds and their fibres; they give us medicine to heal our sickness. The oak, the pine, the cedar, and the ash are not only types of strength and gracefulness; they yield timber for the ships and rafters for the homestead. The mountains serve not only to sanctify and delight the human heart by their sublimity, they help to make the earth habitable by purifying the air and giving birth to the rivers; without them the ground would become stagnant morass and the atmosphere would breathe pestilence. The mighty ocean, which is, in calm, as a waving veil of iridescent colours, and in storm—

The mirror where th' Almighty's form  
Glasses itself in tempests,

is also the helper of man, bearing on its bosom the argosies of many nations, and in its depths the harvest of the sea, without which the harvest of the land would be insufficient for our needs. All nature thus ministers to us—

The whole is either our cupboard of food,  
Or cabinet of pleasure.

And, moreover, nothing is too insignificant to be serviceable. Says Dr. Macmillan : " Even the hoary lichen on the dusky rock, that has drunk in all the hues of the spectrum and made no sign, yields, when artificially treated, its hidden store of colour, and produces a violet and golden hue not unworthy of the fairest garden flower." III. NATURE INCITES TO PRAISE BY THE MORAL QUALITIES SHE EDUCES IN MAN. This is Nature's chief glory, her highest honour, that she is the instrument by which God educates human souls and fits them for their immortal destiny. For we are placed here under the discipline of Nature, and she is a severe task-mistress, from whom nothing is to be had for the mere asking. Nature exacts laborious toil in exchange for all her gifts. She hides her pearls in the depths of the sea, her gold in the sands of the river or the crevices of the rocks; she buries the metals, man's most useful allies, and the coal to smelt those metals, deep down in the heart of the earth; she secretes her balms and her subtle essences where even the cunning chemist can scarce track them. Her most powerful forces, such as electricity, are ever the most elusive and the hardest to be subdued. Everything man extorts from Nature he must win, not only by the sweat of his brow, but by the sweat of his brain. He wrestles with her for her blessing as Jacob wrestled with the angel at Penueel, till almost he seems crippled with the strain. But the conflict proves at last that as a prince he has power with God and has prevailed; he wins the blessing, and, lo! it is not only corn and oil and wine, but rich endowments of mind and heart as well. Think about it, and you will see that almost all the highest moral qualities of our race—patience, endurance, forethought, courage, mutual helpfulness—are the outcome of the necessity to work which Nature lays upon us. (A. M. Mackay, B.A.) *Glory! glory! glory!*—I. The statement of this verse holds good when we consider THE TEMPLE OF THE UNIVERSE. In it everything says, *Glory!* The whole universe is, to the devout mind, as one huge sanctuary in which all things show forth the praise of their Creator. Incline your ears to listen, open your hearts to catch the sweet sounds, as flowers, and clouds, and beasts, and birds, rocks, hills and trees, declare that God is worthy to be praised! We must not let them sing alone. We'll take our key from them, and say, *Glory, too.* II. IN THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM everything saith, *Glory.* I know that when this psalm was written the wondrous pile on Zion's hill had not been commenced. But it was already in David's heart to build it, and, for aught I know, some of the plans of the sacred premises were by this time in his hands. With a prophet's eye he foresaw the building of that holy Temple—its grace, and its grandeur. As Abraham saw Christ's day and was glad, so David, with a seer's vision, perceived the temple crowning Mount Moriah, and said of it, " In His temple everything saith, *Glory.*" III. We may refer this also to OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR, for Jesus called His body the Temple of God. I sometimes think that David, who already foresaw his greater Son, may have thought of Jesus when he said, " Everything in His Temple saith, *Glory.*" A greater than the temple is here. Study Christ's life, and you will find that He lived to God's glory from first to last. At His birth the angels sang, " Glory to God in the highest." In His boyhood He must be about His Father's business, and all through life He did always the things that pleased Him. Everything about Christ, God's Temple, said, *Glory*: every word was to the praise of the Father, every work glorified Him upon the earth, every grace and characteristic reflected the glory of God the Father, for Christ was the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person. 'Twas when He came to die that His body, broken for our sakes, said, *Glory!* loudest and most emphatically. IV. IN CHRIST'S CHURCH EVERYTHING SAYS, *GLORY.* Oh, to get out of the set-ness of our proprieties. " Everything in His temple saith, *Glory.*" V. This brings me to a still more personal matter, viz. THE TEMPLES OF OUR PERSONS. " Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Does everything in the temple say, *Glory?* Are all your powers devoted to the service of God? Are all the wondrous influences that you exercise employed to the praise of Jesus? Is the royal standard flying over every gate of Mansoul? Does it float above the citadel? Do our highest faculties of thought, and memory, and affection, and imagination, pay to God the homage that is due unto His Name? " The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." Oh, for this full consecration, this entire surrender. VI. Let me remind you of THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE to which, as the years fly past, we are hastening on. Oh, for a peep into the land of light. John helps us, for it was his privilege to gaze right into the *Glory.* There His servants serve Him day and night in His Temple. There the

hearts of the redeemed sing out His praise, like the voice of many waters. (*T. Spurgeon.*)

**Vor. 10. The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.—***God's throne upon the flood; or, Divine control:—*There is a well-known line of an English poet, which tells us to "look through Nature up to Nature's God." And not a few of our national poets have nobly done this. But the Bible is the supreme example. Its writers did not refuse to look at Nature; they were ever doing so. I. **That the course of events on earth is full of changes.** Calm to-day, storm to-morrow. II. But "**JEHOVAH SITS UPON THE FLOOD.**" The changes of human life do not disturb Him. Yet more, He controls them all, "He sitteth King for ever." Natural science shows how the smallest and seemingly most insignificant events are all guided by law. Nothing is arbitrary or of chance. God watches over and controls them all. 1. Scripture asserts this. There may be seasons when His people seem to be forsaken so that their enemies ask exultingly, "Where is now their God?" And yet, even then, the answer is, "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." 2. Fulfilled prophecies confirm it. For example, the Advent of Christ. That was predicted seven hundred years before He came, and that He should be born at Bethlehem. 3. The continuance of true religion in spite of all opposition. III. **THE MANNER IN WHICH EVENTS ARE OVERRULED.** 1. By general laws. See the illustration of the text, "the flood." That obeys the law of its nature. Now one of God's general laws is this—that sin is always followed by suffering—and another is—that generation shall be followed by generation: wicked men are removed to make way for better. 2. By special interposition. See the miracles. IV. **LESSONS.** 1. Let the Church of Christ be comforted. 2. Also each individual Christian. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) **King at the flood:—**The king is revealed in the time of the flood. Smaller personalities appear kingly when the waters are smooth; they disappear at the flood. Military officers are very much alike when they are on the parade ground; their genius and quality are revealed on the battlefield. The captain of the boat and the landmen seem equally efficient when the boat glides over still waters, and the days pass in a long picnic, and games are played on the deck; but when the whirlwind awakes, and the boat staggers like a drunken man, the king is seen enthroned! I will measure and judge any one who seeks the throne of my life by his demeanour and worth amid my crises. Among all the candidates for honour and homage I will yield the crown of my obedience to the one who proves to be king at the flood. Let us look round upon two or three men who have come to one of life's emergencies, and who are in need of a sovereign helper. 1. "I am come unto deep waters where the floods overflow me." What is the character of this man's crisis? "Iniquities prevail against me." He is the victim of unclean desire. The inner rooms of the spirit, the holy place, is defiled. He is unable to contemplate the beautiful and to love it. The floods of carnality overflow him. Or perhaps the victim is overborne by the spirit of envy which too frequently manifest itself in deceit and treachery, or he is possessed by the passion of jealousy which makes him a conspirator against his neighbour's good. Whatever may be the type of the man's besetment, the flood is at the gate, and he is overpowered by the invasion of its unclean deeps. What shall we say to him? One would perhaps advise him that the secret of his redemption will consist in "plain living and high thinking." But the counsel is worthless. We are advising a man who is overborne by appetite to control the appetite, and suggesting that a man who is the victim of his own thought should order it in beautiful regularity. How fares it if we call in the Lord Himself? The Master's speech is full of healing confidence and hope. He speaks of a clean heart and a right spirit. He not only unfolds an ideal, but He offers the power by which it can be realized. The unclean channels are flushed and cleansed, and all the powers in the life are quickened and revived. 2. "Save me, O Lord! for the waters are come into my soul." What is the type of this man's sorrow? It is a flood of trouble, perhaps arising from common circumstances such as we are familiar with in our own life. (1) Here is a case of slow cancer. The growth is eating its way, but, oh, so slowly! Day after day, and night after night, the wolf gnaws at the vitals. Let us speak to the victim. What shall we say to her? Matthew Arnold once said:—"In poetry our race will find an ever sure and surer stay." What kind of poetry can we give to the cancer-ridden? If God be gone and the Man of Nazareth is only a pleasing fiction, and immortality only a winsome dream, whatever we offer



will be only as dead ashes; gravel where the soul is pining for bread. Let us call in the Lord God. The very thought of His appearing is comforting. "What I do thou knowest not now." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." (2) Here are a father and mother whose son is in the far country. Their hopes are blighted, their ambition is overthrown. They are overwhelmed, and the waters have come into their souls. What says the world about their child? "He is too far gone;" "he is a hopeless case;" "he is too old to mend;" "there is no remedy for a bad heart." The world has no ministry to offer in the time of the flood. Let us call in the Lord God. Here is His speech: "What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine and go after that which is lost until he find it?" What a hopeful and uplifting word to speak to a broken-hearted father! 3. All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me." "The sorrows of death compass me." This type of overwhelming sorrow is one of the most familiar sights in the common way. Here is a beautiful wedded life. The early intimacy was like a spring day. The wedding was only the welding of ties already sanctified. The home was a haunt of love and peace. Then a storm came, and the billows rolled against the little sanctuary. The sorrows of death compassed it, and the wife is gone! Now, leave God outside, and let us go inside. What shall we say to the bereaved husband? Shall we tell him that "other friends remain," that "loss is common to the race"? Let us call in Jesus. "Thy brother shall rise again." "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye shall be also." "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Who is King? "The Lord sat as King at the flood." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *A turbulent scene and a tranquil God*:—This psalm shows the influence of Godliness upon the intellectual faculties, the social sympathies, and the religious instincts of human nature. The text gives us:—I. A TURBULENT SCENE. "A flood." A flood suggests—1. Commotion. The moral domain is all commotion. Look at it spiritually: "There is no peace, saith my God," etc. Look at it socially,—nationally. Souls are all in commotion here. 2. Innovation. It has broken down barriers, etc. So have souls. 3. Distress. It is furious and violent, etc. The moral world is not like a river, flowing on peacefully in its channel. Nor like the ocean, moving, even when most tumultuous, within its own proper boundaries. It is a "flood." II. A TRANQUIL GOD. "The Lord sitteth." This implies on His part—1. A consciousness of His right to reign. If He had any moral misgivings He would not be at ease. An usurper could not be tranquil over such a tumultuous empire. 2. A consciousness of a supremacy of power to reign. He has no feeling of incapacity. He can control with consummate ease the whole. We rejoice in His supremacy over the flood. (*Homilist.*)

**Ver. 11. The Lord will give strength unto His people: the Lord will bless His people with peace.—God's gifts to His own:**—I. THE BLESSINGS PROMISED.

1. Strength. How needed this is, for sin has made man weak. He tries to hide his weakness, but in vain. Nor can he heal himself. And after he is converted he still needs God's strength, "who giveth power to the faint." He would certainly fall and perish without it. And from this gift of strength comes—2. Peace. The mariner in the storm is at peace because he knows that his ship is sound and strong and his pilot skilful. II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THESE PROMISES. "His people." These are they who have been chosen from the beginning, brought to Christ, and received His adoption as Sons of God. Two chief marks of His people are—1. Humility. 2. Faith. And these shall be blessed with peace. Some men are cursed with it—the peace of indifference, hypocrisy, and the hardened heart. For unbelief produces a counterfeit peace when God lets a sinner alone in his sin. (*Stephen Bridge, M.A.*) *Promise of strength and peace:*—I. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE BLESSINGS HERE PROMISED? 1. Strength—to contend with—(1) The powers of darkness (Eph. vi. 12; 1 Pet. v. 8; 2 Tim. ii. 26) (2) The world—a continual snare to the people of God. Its smiles and frowns, its promises and threatenings, are equally dangerous to their peace and safety. It draws them from the path of duty by flattering prospects of pleasure, of wealth, of honour, of ease, or power. It strives to shake their firmness by the dread of poverty, shame, or persecution. (3) Their own natural depravity, and the sin remaining in their hearts (Gal v. 17; Rom. vii. 23). 2. Peace—the great blessing of the Gospel (John xiv. 27). (1) Peace with God—through Christ (Eph. i. 0).

(2) Peace of mind (2 Cor. iv. 8; 2 Tim. i. 12). II. WHO ARE THE LORD'S PEOPLE, TO WHOM THESE BLESSINGS BELONG? Those who value them; feel their need of them; and are earnestly seeking of Him an interest in them. (*E. Cooper, M.A.*) *The peace of God, the strength of His people*:—Our text in its first clause points out the process by which we are prepared, and the second is a declaration of the privileges which are to be enjoyed by Christians. I. WHAT IS THAT PEACE WHICH GOD PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE? "My peace I give unto you." The peace of Christ—enjoyed by Him, and bequeathed to His followers—was not a peace resulting from a sense that sin was forgiven, for He had done "no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." It must have been the thorough harmony which there was between His will and the Divine, His perfect acquiescence in every appointment of the Father, His undeviating confidence in His protection, and His imperturbable assurance of His love. These we may believe to have been the elements in the peace of a being, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners"; but who, notwithstanding His freedom from all guilt, had to make His way through much tribulation to a throne prepared for Him at His Father's right hand. And, though there must be respects in which the peace attainable by ourselves will differ from that enjoyed by our Saviour, still, forasmuch as He left His own peace to His Church, we may expect that the points of resemblance will be more numerous than those of distinction. We have every right to contend that there will enter into the constituent elements of a Christian's peace, that harmony with the Divine will, that acquiescence in the Divine dealings, that confidence in the Divine protection, and that assurance of the Divine love, which must have composed the peace of Christ; for these belonged not to the Saviour as He differed from ourselves, but rather as He was a man, living the life of faith in the midst of trials and temptations. If the peace of God reigns in your heart, you will have a consciousness that sin is forgiven; an ever-growing earnestness in striving after holiness; a tranquillity undisturbed by the calamities of life; a hope superior to the terrors of death. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS PEACE AND THAT STRENGTH WITH WHICH IT IS IDENTIFIED IN THE TEXT. In spiritual things, the Christian has need of being strengthened both in the head and heart; and now let us see whether in giving him "peace," God does not give him "strength" both in the one and in the other. 1. First as to the head. You are always to distinguish very carefully between what we may call the offensive and the defensive weapons of a Christian; between the arguments with which he may attempt to beat down the infidelity of another, and those which may suffice to the keeping off infidelity from himself. If the believer know little or nothing of the external testimony on the side of revelation, he will be no match for his opponent, and must not expect to undermine his scepticism. But will he, on this account, be himself an easy prey to the infidel? is there nothing to be expected but that, because unequipped with weapons for an offensive war, he will be found unprepared to maintain a defensive? We reply, that, on the contrary, his mind is too well strengthened to be carried by the assaults of an enemy. We are speaking of a man who, although he may not have studied what are called the evidences of Christianity, has been long acting on the supposition that the Bible is divine, obeying its precepts as the precepts of God, and relying on its promises as the promises of God. And we can be sure of such a man, that he has not proceeded in this course without becoming his own witness to the truth of the Scriptures; acting on the precepts, he has found himself partaker of the promises, and thus has obtained simple, irresistible evidence that the book is true, and therefore divine. 2. See next how this peace will strengthen the heart, or the affections. It is through our not setting the standard of Christian privilege sufficiently high, that even believers are so often overcome, whether by the world or the flesh. If they aimed at what we are sure they might acquire—an abiding, elevating sense of God's love and favour; an actual delight in Him; and such an anticipation of heavenly joys as would make them already dwellers in His presence; they would have comparatively no relish for base and transient pleasures, and would therefore be little moved by the solicitations which now too frequently prevail. If the heart were thoroughly and deeply engaged in religion, they might oppose, as it were, pleasures to pleasures, riches to riches, honours to honours—the pleasures, riches, honours, which God alone can bestow, to those which are proffered by the world; and thus would they be attached to the service of piety, by the very same ties which attach others to the service of sin, even the ties of inclination and preference. It ought to be thus; and it would be thus, if greater heed were

given to religion, as an internal, vital, happy-making thing. But so long as Christians remain in a languid, half-hearted condition, slaving through duties in place of finding them privileges, talking about heaven in place of obtaining its foretastes, obeying God as a master, in place of delighting in Him as a Father,—what wonder if the world often gain an easy victory, so that what is ignoble attracts them, what is transient detains, what is worthless fascinates? And it is in thorough agreement with these statements that the psalmist in our text identifies strength with peace. We have shown you, that in this peace are included an abiding sense of Divine favour, a firm hope of future happiness, and such earnestness of heaven as shall stimulate, whilst they gratify, the Christian. And what power will the world, with its vanities, its gauds, its riches, its pleasures, have over an individual in whom this peace abides? **III. How THIS PEACE OF GOD MAY BE OBTAINED.** If you would enjoy this peace, you must cultivate a devotional habit—a habit of communion with your Father which is in heaven. We can hardly doubt that one great reason why Christians make so little progress, and have so little enjoyment is, that they are so scant in their private devotions. God is ready to bestow great blessings; but then they must be asked for, and importuned for. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." We have but to enlarge our desires; and God will increase His supplies. Let none of us then wonder if he have not much of that Divine "peace which passeth all understanding," and if, in consequence, he be often overcome by temptations and disturbed by fears, if he be little in the habit of secret prayer and meditation. It is a good thing to be diligent in public worship; but nothing can make up for negligence in private. You may learn and obtain much in church, and so forsake not the assembling of yourselves; but it is, after all, in the closet that you may expect the best lessons, and the finest glimpses of immortality. See to it, then, ye who name the name of Christ, that ye be frequent and fervent in private prayer to God. Thus shall our text be fulfilled in your experience, and the Lord Himself shall "bless you with peace." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The Christian's peace:*—Our text closes this wondrously beautiful psalm. There seems to be an allusion to the priestly benediction with which the sacred services of Israel were concluded—"The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . . and give thee peace." And it points us to that which, through Christ, we now obtain. Consider, therefore—I. **THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING PROMISED,—peace.** 1. The peace, or sweet and delightful composure of mind, which arises from the sense of reconciliation with God. 2. The peace which arises from the practical influence and operation of religion upon the human passions. Let the unconverted confess the truth that these are the sources of most painful and distressing agitation. Do they not carry the elements of wild disturbance within them? Now the influence of religion is to subdue all these and thus exempt the people of God from the chief miseries which have yet been felt upon earth. Christians—is it not so? II. **WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS BLESSING MAY BE MOST FULLY EXHIBITED IN ITS SURPRISING VALUE?** It is evidently intended, by the manner in which it is here spoken of, that we should consider it as of high and incomparable worth. It is the climax of the psalm. And this estimate of it is just, for—I. This peace greatly exalts and dignifies the nature of those who possess it. 2. It is a sure antidote and support amidst all possible visitations of sorrow. See Isa. xxxii. at end; Heb. xi., and see the history of the apostles, the martyrs and Christ's Church in all ages. And the sweetness of this peace is the beginning of the quiet of the skies, the Sabbath of our God. III. **WHAT ARE THE IMPRESSIONS THIS SUBJECT SHOULD PRODUCE?** 1. Gratitude and devotedness. 2. Those who have it not should be filled with desire for it. You cannot know real peace until this is yours. (*James Parsons.*) *The blessings of peace—they are the gift of God:*—I. **THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE.** Man appears from the harmless make of his body, the tenderness of his affections, the sovereignty of his mind, and his dependence upon others' help, as well as by the rules of life prescribed to him by express revelation, to be formed for a social inoffensive creature. Now the natural state of each being is the happy one. And the happiness of peace is like that of health, it spreads through the whole of the civil, as that doth of the animal, constitution. We do not perceive the value of either until we have lost them. Therefore, to discern the advantages of peace, we must recollect the miseries of war. 1. The expense, which falls mainly on the poor. 2. The toil, hardship and suffering, and the loss by death. 3. The disaster done to commerce. 4. Its wickedness in its origin, in its progress, and in its effect. Nevertheless it is sometimes unavoidable. It was so in our own case.

But we have made terms of agreement, and we rejoice that war is at an end. II. THE BLESSING OF PEACE IS GOD'S GIFT. He puts men's minds upon the seeking after it. He is the giver of all good. And such events as peace and war cannot but occupy a distinguished place in the scheme of Providence. III. TO ENTITLE US TO THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE WE MUST BE HIS PEOPLE. What is our case? Are we God's people? Do we live as set forth in Titus ii. 11-14? Do we know ourselves by this picture? Is it not rather as told in Jer. iv. 22? How can we hope for the favour of Providence if we continue ungodly and regardless of religion and virtue as our nation too much is? What must follow? Read Jer. xxiii. 14, 17, 19, 22. Remember, too, what Azariah said to Asa (2 Chron. xv. 1, 2). A tottering state cannot be supported or a sinking one raised without national reformation (Jer. vi. 9, 14; Isa. lvii. 21). And in this each individual must bear his own share. The fewer that will amend, the more need we add to their number. Therefore we speak as bidden (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 2 Cor. v. 20). (T. Secker.) *Peace*:—Peace is interior repose of spirit: and this repose of spirit, as we know, is the result of the satisfaction of spiritual needs. In the degree in which we are possessed by any conscious need, and know that that need is not met, in that condition, of necessity, we are in a position of restlessness. But when this need is met, then immediately our inner being passes into a state of peace, and then we say that the Christian life is a life of peace. This, then, is the life to which God calls us—a life of interior spiritual satisfaction in which we rest in the satisfaction of possession, and in the satisfaction of well-based hope. What we are craving for as the condition of peace is this—that we should be living in right union with our God, for in that union is the satisfaction of our every need. When, then, we are told that the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace, what we are taught is this—that God, and especially now in the days of the Christian economy, is bringing His people into that right relation with Himself in which they find their peace in Him. What is the first essential condition of our being in right union with God? It is—is it not?—the fruit of that great primal religious need, the need of the conscience. We are perfectly aware that we have passed into wrong relations with God, that the cause of that wrong relation is sin, and that of necessity sin involves this separation from God, this passing into wrong relations with Him. Forgiveness means always, the restitution of relations of peace between him who forgives and he who is forgiven. It carries with it much more, but it does mean this—if there is variance between one who is wronged and the wrong-doer, that variance can only be changed into right relations and ensuing peace by the forgiveness of him who is wronged. This is the first thing God does. He reveals Himself to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, who is the great High Priest of humanity, in the power of His passion, who has passed into right-hand relationship with Himself, to reinstate them in right relationship by His forgiveness. And this is not all. You see forgiveness is never really effected unless the one to whom that forgiveness is extended is in a position in which he will receive that forgiveness. And God by His Holy Spirit works upon the hearts of sinners, makes them penitents, speaks to them as penitents, speaks to them His forgiveness, and that forgiveness is effectual in reinstating in union with Himself the one who has been alienated from Him by sin. This is the first condition, but there is peace even greater than the peace of reconciliation; peace deeper than that of the conscience rejoicing in the Divine forgiveness—I mean the peace of fruition. I am in union with God, and the effect of that is this—His light illuminates my mind; He reveals Himself to me; I know Him not simply with the external knowledge in which a student attains to the knowledge of Him, but I know by a direct interior revelation of Himself unto my mind. He speaks to me and I know; I see with the eyes of my understanding the fair beauty of my God. And when I know God, and in the measure in which I know God, I know mental rest. What is the only rational position of the creature in the presence of the Creator? What is the only true exercise of that moral freedom wherewith I am endowed, and consciously through the mysterious possession of my will? It is a mystery. "Our wills are ours we know not how," but the meaning of this mysterious gift is clear. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine." "Thy service is perfect freedom," and my will yields to the attraction of that vision in which my heart delights, only it is drawn into conformity with the will of God; and the end of that conformity of will breathed out here in active obedience and in patient endurance is the very ascension of my spirit unto God. It is the realizing of the law of sacrifice. By it I return unto God, lie upon the altar of God's heart, and am consumed with the

fire of God's communicated grace. And if rest of heart is in God's knowledge, if rest of heart is in God's love, rest of will is in conformity with God's will. But, yet again, He calls me to another rest, and that is the rest of activity. Filled with the knowledge and love of God, the will raised up into active conformity with the will of God, activity becomes necessary; and thus lifted up into union with God, I pass into His Sabbath. But what is the Sabbath of God? Is it a life of inactivity? Is the attitude even consistent with inactivity? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Within the limits of His Divine Being the work ceaseth not. As the God of nature His work ceaseth not. Within the Church as the God of grace His work ceaseth not. And what is His work in Himself? What is His work in the universe? What is His work in the Church? What is His work in the individual soul but the work of peacemaker! Behold, maintaining the harmony of His own eternal life within Himself, maintaining the harmony of all these forces combined in such marvellous unity in creation, restoring broken harmony in man's interior being, restoring the true harmony of man with man because He has restored the true harmony between God and man; the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace, and in this great work He associates Himself with us. And yet once more, still it is true our rest is partial as far as present experience. The peace of conscience is often troubled by our fight with renewed failures and sins. Our knowledge is partial, our love fluctuates, our wills tremble, our service here is maimed; but all this is transitory. Here in a measure our position is a position of a hunger and thirst; and yet in that hunger and thirst there is rest. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." In restlessness there is rest to-day. And the rest of hope! Quickly the years are flying by, shorter and shorter is the way that lies before us in our earthly pilgrimage; clearer and clearer before our gaze as the years go by comes the vision of Jerusalem the Golden, the vision of peace. I dare not say that that is mine, for I may fail even yet; but as year by year goes by, and I know the constancy of His love and the mighty power of His grace, each flying year that finds me at its close, not by my fidelity but through His mercy, with God's hope in my heart and His peace in my conscience, strengthens within me the blessed hope of perseverance to the end of life—the blessed hope of perfected peace. (*G. Body, D.D.*) *Peace considered as God's blessing*:—I. HOW VALUABLE A GOOD PEACE IS IN ITSELF, AS IT STANDS OPPOSED TO BLOODY AND DESTRUCTIVE WARS. 1. Consider war in its causes—the wickedness of men, and the just vengeance of God. 2. Consider war in itself—the destruction of creatures made after the image of God. 3. Consider war in its consequences and effects. II. WHAT THINGS ARE REQUISITE TO MAKE THIS A REAL AND COMPLETE BLESSING, CAPABLE OF BEING APPROPRIATED UNTO GOD'S OWN PECULIAR PEOPLE. 1. Conjunction with copious effusion of the Spirit of God (*Ezek. xxix. 23-9*). 2. When the gospel of peace has its free course, and a large spread in the world (*Micah iv. 2, 3*). 3. When, according to Divine dictates, kings do reign and princes decree justice (*Prov. viii. 15*; *Isa. i. 26*). 4. When God gives pastors after his own heart. 5. When hereupon the Divine government obtains, and takes place in the minds and consciences of men (*Ps. lxxvii*). 6. When there is a manifest prevalence of Divine love among men that bear the same name of Christians. 7. When God appears to be reconciled to such a people. For in His favour is life. There is a spiritual sort of blessing that may be enclosed in the external blessing, and particularly in this of peace. Such an external blessing as that of peace is not a complete blessing. Because it is no argument of God's special favour. Men are not made by it the better men. They may by it become so much the worse men. "The prosperity of fools destroys them." The first Scipio opened the way to the Roman power, the second to their luxury. Their virtue languished, and they were conquered by their own vices, who before could conquer the world. Man, notwithstanding an external peace, may be as miserable in this, and in another world, as if they had never known it. III. SEE WHAT CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING WE HAVE, WITH REFERENCE TO PEACE AS A GENERAL GOOD; AND ALSO WHAT CAUSE OF SUPPLICATION, THAT WE MAY HAVE PEACE AS THE SPECIAL BLESSING OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Let us pray—1. That there may be a larger diffusion of vital religion, wherein stands, indeed, man's being at peace with God. 2. That there may be that spirit as a spirit of mutual love among Christians, to reconcile them to one another. (*John Howe, M.A.*) *The peace of the devil, and the peace of God*:—Peace and rest are two names for a flower which buds on earth, but is only found full-blown in heaven; yet even the faint perfume of the unopened blossom excites our strong

desire. Every precious thing in this world is sure to be counterfeited. If the government mint issues gold and silver money, rogues will be found to make spurious coin. Satan is the cunning ape of God; and whatever God does, he tries to do the like with his enchantments. Hence, while there is a peace more precious than the gold of Ophir, there is another peace which is worse than worthless. When a soul is borne up upon the waters of false peace, its case is hopeless till that peace is dried up, and the soul is stranded in self-despair. I. THE DEVIL'S PEACE (Luke xi. 21). 1. This peace is often merely outward. The plough-boy, when he goes through the churchyard, is afraid of ghosts, and therefore whistles to keep his courage up; and so, many who are loaded with apprehension try to conceal it by those flippant songs in which they boast of "driving dull care away." In the secret of their soul that same dull care sits on the throne of their hearts, and is not to be driven away by the ballad, and the fiddle and the dance. 2. This peace is false. A sinner may say, "I am at peace as to God"; but if this comes of forgetting or ignoring Him, it is a sorry sham. If a man has to forget God before he has peace, that fact betrays a fatal secret. If the man, on remembering God, is troubled, then his peace is a mere writing on the sand. Better know that we are at war, if it be so, than dote upon a peace which is a fool's paradise, and only exists in fancy. 3. To many this peace comes through ignorance. They know not that sin is a deadly viper, and therefore they toy with it as with a bird. 4. With many, however, it is not so much ignorance as thoughtlessness. This is one of the devil's great nets, in which he entangles many. If he can keep you from thinking, he will keep you from believing. 5. This peace, in many cases, is the result of carnal security. Will things always be as they have been? Can you be sure of it? Are you not warned that it will not be so? Your eye is not so clear as once it was; your limbs are not so vigorous as once they were. If there be no change in the world, there is a great change in you during the last few years. Before to-morrow's sun has risen you may lie upon the bed of death. 6. Some have a peace that comes of superstition. No outward performance can enable you to dispense with inward repentance and faith. 7. Unbelief brings false peace to thousands. Sin must be punished, and if your peace is built upon the supposition that it will not be so, your foundation is even less to be depended upon than the sand. Hazard not your soul upon a lie. 8. Many are kept in peace through companionship. Choose rather as friends those who roughly tell you solemn truths, than those who with excess of sweetness would flatter you to your overlasting undoing. 9. Peace caused by the devil is often the awful prelude of the last tremendous storm. Beware of insensibility! Your unfeeling state should warn you that you are given over to destruction. In the higher and colder latitudes, when men feel a sleepiness stealing over them, their companions stir them up, and rub them, and will not let them slumber; for to sleep is to wake no more. II. THE LORD'S PEACE. A man of God lay dying, but he was very calm; yea, more—supremely happy. One said to him: "Friend, how is it that you have such peace?" He answered, "I can see no ground or cause for it save this: it is written, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.'" Was not that a satisfactory reply? There is a weight of argument in it. If your mind is stayed on God, He will keep you in perfect peace. 1. The peace that we should desire to possess is a peace which is a blessing. False peace is a curse; but to be soundly at peace with God is an unalloyed blessing, and it bringeth no sorrow with it. To fall back upon the Father's bosom, and say, "I know that He Himself loves me, and I know that I love Him"; to look up to Jesus, and to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"; to feel the movings of the Holy Spirit, and to yield ourselves up to His influences—this is peace unspeakable. Do you know it? It is not only a blessing in itself, but it is a blessing in its consequences. There is no man so humble as the man that is at perfect peace with God: he wonders at the blessing he enjoys. There is no man so grateful; there is no man so courageous; there is no man so little affected by the world; there is no man who bears suffering so patiently; there is no man who is so ready for heaven as the man who is at perfect peace with God, and knows it. 2. This peace only comes from God. Here we have peace from lips that cannot lie, from a heart which cannot change, through the blood which has made a full atonement. 3. This peace comes only to His own people. If you have done with self, the world, and sin, as the main desire of your heart, you are among His people. 4. This is peace in the time of tempest, and peace after storm. Some of us enjoy our greatest peace when the Lord is abroad, and

the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. We feel a rapture as we perceive that our Father is very near, and is speaking so that we hear His voice. In spiritual storms that voice is our comfort; and after the tempests are over, the Lord speaks a sweet hush to the hearts of His children. He allays our fears, while He whispers, "It is I; be not afraid." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A boundless promise of peace*:—I should like an everlasting cheque from some millionaire, running thus: "So often as this cheque is presented at the bank, pay the bearer what he asks." Few persons possessed of such a document would fail to put in an appearance at the bank. We should be regular visitors. O ye children of God, you have such a promissory note in the text before you! The Lord hath endless, boundless peace within Himself, and when you have long enjoyed peace with Him you may go to Him again and say, "Lord, renew my peace. I am troubled, but Thou art unmoved: bless me with Thy peace." When you are rich, and find that riches bring cares, bring these to your God, who will bless His people with peace. When you are poor, do the same. When children are born to you, and with them come family cares, take the new burden to the Lord, for He giveth peace. And if the children die, and you weep as your young shoots are cut off, still turn to the Lord, and believe that He will bless you with peace. If you grow sick yourself, and the tokens of a deadly disease appear upon you, still be calm, for He will bless you with peace. When you must go upstairs and lie down upon your last bed to rise no more, then, even then, the Lord will bless you with His ever-living peace; and when you wake up at the sound of the last trump the Lord will still keep you in perfect peace. (*Ibid.*) *Peace*:—You know what peace is, do you? Few common terms are less understood. Silence is not peace; nor is indifference; nor is insensibility; nor is the quiescence which comes of selfish fear of consequences. There cannot be peace where there cannot be passion. It is only in a modified sense that we speak of a tarn, or a pool sheltered on every side, being at peace; but when we speak of a peaceful sea we speak accurately, for the sea is exposed to forces which rouse it into terrible tempests. Peace must, then, be understood as a composite term,—as an affirmative, not as a negative condition. Some men have no sensibilities towards God; they see Him, hear Him, feel Him, nowhere; not in the light, not in the wind, not in the day's story of gift and love and mercy; they are in a state of moral torpor. Are they at peace with God? Most truly not, for peace is other than death. Where there is true peace there is of necessity a right relation of forces; nothing preponderant, nothing conflicting; everything has its due. In the case of the heart there must be life; that life must balance the entire nature, judgment, conscience, will, affection; towards God there must be intelligence, devotion, constancy; towards man there must be justice, modesty, honour. Finding all this, and we find peace; finding a tendency towards this, and we find a tendency towards peace; finding this in perfection, and we find a peace which passeth understanding. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Peace, not indolence*:—In calling us to peace, God has not called us to indolence; a deep sleep must not be mistaken for a deep peace. We must resemble in some degree the worlds which are at rest by reason of their velocity. The earth is at rest, yet no wing of flying bird can travel so fast; the light gives no sign of motion, yet no runner can give us the faintest idea of its speed. Rest is the ultimate expression of motion. God is at rest, yet energy is streaming out of Him constantly to vivify all the creations of His power. We refer to these things to save the text from abuse, lest the alien should claim the child's heritage, and lest the child himself should forget his duty to the alien. Such is peace, and such are they to whom the blessing is given. (*Ibid.*)

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### PSALM XXX.

**VERS. 1-12. I will extol Thee, O Lord; for Thou hast lifted me up.**—*A Psalm of deliverance*.—The title of this psalm is apparently a composite, the usual "Psalm of David" having been enlarged by the awkward insertion of "A Song at the Dedication of the House," which probably indicates its later liturgical use, and not its first destination. Its occasion was evidently a deliverance from grave peril; and, whilst its tone is strikingly inappropriate if it had been composed for

the inauguration of temple, tabernacle, or palace, one can understand how the venerable words, which praised Jehovah for swift deliverance from impending destruction, would be felt to fit the circumstances and emotions of the time when the Temple, profaned by the mad acts of Antiochus Epiphanes, was purified and the ceremonial worship restored. Never had Israel seemed nearer going down to the pit; never had deliverance come more suddenly and completely. The intrusive title is best explained as dating from that time and indicating the use then found for the song. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David*:—It was doubtless very different from the cottage he occupied when he was a shepherd. But there was no impropriety in this change. As a king he was obliged to do many things from a regard to his station rather than from personal choice. Yet he was godly there as in his former abode. Hence, entering his new house, he consecrates it to God. Let it be our concern that our dwelling may be the house of God while we live, and the gate of heaven when we die. David was a poet, and he here elaborates his deliverance from a dangerous disease. I. **DAVID'S MIND BEFORE HIS AFFLICTION**—he had thought and said, "I shall never be moved. Hence the need of affliction. II. **UNDER IT**. He cried to the Lord. III. **AFTER THE AFFLICTION**. Renewed consecration to God. Hence his vow to build a house for the Lord. (*W. Jay.*) *Mercies remembered*:—St. James says, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms"—that is, in everything acknowledge God. A true saint in prosperity gives God thanks for His mercies. Therefore when all are in prosperity, it is easy to distinguish the true from the false, because they take directions outwardly and manifestly different. The Church in her joy praises God, the world in its joy praises man. This psalm is a beautiful specimen of church music considered in its highest character, as aiming at the praise of God. It was sung in immediate connection with the dedication of the house of David. Such a dedication was, amongst Israel, deemed a thing of great solemnity and importance (*Deut. xii.*). And now, entering in his new abode, David looks back upon the mercies of God. I. **THAT HIS ENEMIES HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO REJOICE OVER HIM**. He had many enemies, and there are few of us who are without them. If we are in good reputation and esteem, we have reason to thank God as David did. II. **GOD'S HEALING GRACE**. "Thou hast healed me." Who has not such mercy to record? III. **THE MANY DELIVERANCES HE HAD EXPERIENCED**. "Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave." And such deliverance, both of body and soul, we have known. And on such an occasion as entering a new home, how good it is, as did David, to remember God's mercies in the past. IV. **AND WE SHOULD SEEK TO ASSOCIATE OTHERS IN OUR PRAISE**. "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." It is His holiness which is the security of yours. And His anger, how momentary that compared with his life-long favour! V. **THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER**. "Thou hast turned," etc. (*H. M'Neile, D.D.*) *Christian elevation*:—Though believers in Christ may not be lifted up like the psalmist in a temporal point of view, yet they are all, like him, lifted up in a spiritual point of view. 1. Above all danger from the wrath to come. 2. To the enjoyment and possession of spiritual life. 3. To a place in God's graciously adopted family. 4. Above all fatal evil from enemies, whether of a temporal or spiritual description. 5. To the hope of a safe death, a blessed resurrection, and a joyful eternity. (*T. Adam.*) *The first and the final stage in true worship*:—I. **The first stage—GRATITUDE**. 1. He points to God's mercy as having come to him in various ways. (1) As an extrication from difficulties. (2) As a protection from enemies. (3) As a restoration to health. (4) As preservation of life. 2. The gratitude from which true worship springs implies the belief—(1) That the favours received are utterly undeserved. (2) That they were intended to serve us. II. **The final stage—ADORATION**. 1. On account of the holiness of God's character. In heaven His character attracts all eyes, absorbs all thoughts, transports all souls, inspires all anthems. Let us aspire to this highest stage of worship. 2. On account of the eternal flow of His love. Suffering is always—(1) Brief. (2) Preliminary. (*Homilist.*)

**Vers. 4, 5. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His.—Singing saints**:—Singing has a curative effect upon many of the maladies of the soul; I am sure that it lightens the burdens of life, and I was about to say that it shortens the weary way of duty if we can but sing as we travel along it. This holy employment is pleasant and profitable, and it is preparatory for another world and a higher state. I. **THE**



PECULIAR FITNESS OF THE EXHORTATION TO OUR PRESENT ENGAGEMENT. You are to come to the table where you remember your Saviour's death, where you are to feed upon the memorials of His passion. Come thither with a heart prepared for song. "Oh!" says one, "I thought I had better come with tears." Yes, come with tears; they will be very sweet to Christ if you let them fall upon His feet to wash them with your penitential streams. "Oh, sir!" says another, "I thought that surely I must come with deep solemnity." So you must, woe be unto you if you come in any other way; but do you know of any divorce between solemnity and joy? I do not. 1. We celebrate a work accomplished. Talk of the labours of Hercules? What are these compared with the toil of the Christ of God? Talk of the conquests of Cæsar? What are these beside the victories of Christ, who hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men? 2. We celebrate a result realized, at least in a measure. I know that the bread and the wine are symbols of the flesh and the blood, but I know also that they are something more; they are not only symbols of the things themselves, but also of that which comes out of those things. The very setting-up of the communion-table, and the gathering of men and women to it that they may spiritually feast upon their dying Lord, is a reason for thankfulness. 3. There is this reason why some of us should sing unto the Lord, for here is a blessing enjoyed. 4. This communion reminds us of a hope revived. "Till He come." Every hour brings Him nearer. II. THE SPECIAL SUITABILITY OF THE SUBJECT FOR OUR MEDITATION. "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." 1. Think of Divine holiness vindicated. God is just, yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. We are going to commune with a God who, even that He might commune with us, and indulge His love to His chosen, would not break His own law, or do that which, on the strictest judgment, could be regarded as unjust. I do rejoice in that unquestionable fact, and my heart is glad as I remind you of it. 2. Let us give thanks at the remembrance of Christ's holiness declared. It is a happy occupation to look upon the perfect character of our dear Redeemer. 3. I think also that it will be quite congruous with our present engagement if we think of God's holiness as the guarantee of our salvation. It is upon the righteousness of God that we rest our hope, after all. If God can lie, then not one promise of His is to be trusted. If God can do an unrighteous thing, then His covenant may be flung to the winds. But God is not unrighteous to forget the work of His dear Son, and "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." 4. At this table we may give thanks that the holiness of God is our mark, the object for us to aim at—aye, and that to which we shall one day attain. He does not begin to make a vessel unto honour, and then cease His work; but He perfects that which He begins. III. The text is very appropriate for the communion, because of THE SUITABILITY OF THE PEOPLE of whom it speaks, for they are the same people who ought to come to this table. 1. Those who come to this table should be saints. A "saint" is a holy person, one who aims at being holy, one who is set apart for the service and glory of God. These are the people who are to give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, because God has made them holy, too. They are partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, and so they are saints, and they are the people who ought to come to the table of the Lord. 2. They are not only saints, but they are "saints of His." That is to say, they are God's saints; they are saints of His making, for they were great sinners till He made saints of them; and they are saints of His keeping, for they would soon be sinners again if He did not keep them. They are saints enlisted in His service, sworn to serve under His banner, to be faithful to Him unto death. They are "saints of His," that is, they are saints whom He purchased with His precious blood, and whom He means to have as His for ever because He has bought them with so great a price. They are saints who shall be with Him in that day when He shall appear with all His holy ones. 3. They are God's thankful saints. The communion is a eucharist, a giving of thanks from beginning to end. 4. They should be singing saints. People express their praise and delight spontaneously concerning far less things than the joys of God, and the privileges of His people; therefore, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The duty of gladness*:—When people want to make things attractive in farming, they give exhibitions of their products. The women bring their very best butter; the men bring the noblest beets and vegetables of every kind; and from the orchard they bring the rarest

fruits; and when you go into the room where all these things are displayed, they seem to you attractive and beautiful. It seems to me that this is the way a Christian Church ought to represent the Christian life. You ought to pile up your apples and pears and peaches and flowers and vegetables to show what is the positive fruit of religion. But many people in the Christian life do as farmers would do who would go to a show, and carry—one pigweed; another thistle; another dock; and another old, hard lumps of clay; and should arrange these worthless things along the sides of the room and mourn over them. Christians are too apt to represent the dark side of religion in their conversation and meetings. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **At the remembrance of His holiness.**—*The holiness of God*:—This sentence occurs again at the end of the ninety-seventh psalm, and is in reality one of the most elevated sentences Holy Scripture contains. Here is a sinful creature adoring the Lord not for His mercy but for His holiness, and calling on others to do the same. What cannot the grace of God do in a sinner's heart? **I. THE HOLINESS OF GOD.** It affirms that in God all good is present and all evil absent. He calls His saints on earth holy, but they are so only by comparison with their fellow-men: and the holiness of the angels is not only limited, but, as all creature holiness, it is derived, it has its origin not in themselves, but in God. He alone is holy in Himself. And now consider—**II. THE EFFECT THIS WONDERFUL HOLINESS SHOULD HAVE UPON US.** We are called upon "to sing unto the Lord and to give thanks." Now this implies—1. A happy confidence in the Lord's mercy. For none can ever thank the Lord for His holiness till he is able to take a firm stand in His mercy. His holiness looked at alone is appalling to us. We can scarcely bear to hear of it. But when we are in Christ, resting on Him, then we can look calmly upon His holiness. Embraced in His mercy, the soul feels as Noah, shut in in the ark—safe, though destruction be all around. 2. A delightful admiration of God's holiness. God delights in it Himself. Nearly fifty times He calls Himself "the Holy One." And the angels and saints in heaven glory in it. See the trisagion, "Holy, holy, holy," etc. And we are called upon to share in this delight. The communion service bids us say, "Therefore with angels and archangels," etc. Happy are we if we can understand such language and really join in it. 3. A grateful sense of his obligations to the Divine holiness. What delight to turn from the dreary sinfulness of men, to the holiness of God. The thought of it is as an oasis in the wilderness. And it sheds a radiance on all His other attributes. What would any of them be apart from this? And what holiness we have is an emanation from His, and, because of His, will be perfected. Therefore let us live in remembrance of it. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

**Ver. 5. In His favour is life.**—*Life in the favour of God*:—The return of God's favour to an afflicted soul is like life from the dead,—nothing is so reviving. All our bliss is bound up in God's favour; and if we have that, we have an infinite treasure, whatever else we may want. **I. ILLUSTRATE THE SENTIMENT OF THE TEXT.** 1. Our natural life is from God's favour. In Him we live, move, and have our being; He secures us from innumerable evils; He gives us bread, and water, and clothing, and health, and strength, and intellect. 2. Our spiritual life is from the favour of God. 3. Our eternal life is from the favour of God. By that favour we become entitled to heaven by the merits and righteousness of Christ; by that favour we are meetened for heaven through regeneration and sanctification; by that favour we are brought to heaven, through all the trying pilgrimage of life. O what views will the redeemed spirit have of the favour of God then! **II. SOME PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.** 1. How vain it is to expect happiness from worldly prosperity without the favour of God! What does it avail, if the whole universe smile on a man, if he be under the frown of God? 2. How fearful are the afflictions of life without the favour of God. How keen must be the strokes of the Divine rod to him who views them as the strokes of an enemy. 3. If the favour of God is life, then what vast multitudes are dead. They can find time for their games, sports, recreations, and worldly pursuits; but no time to seek the favour of God and the salvation of their souls! And how inexcusable are such persons. Beggars, when they might be the favourites of heaven; preferring sickness to health, blindness to sight, danger to safety, and the anger to the favour of God. 4. If in God's favour there is life, what a dreadful place hell must be. 5. If in God's favour there is life, what a blessed and glorious place must heaven be. (*W. Gregory.*) *Where is life?*—There are many different opinions as to the place of true enjoyment. Some think it is in animal gratifications; others in material

possessions; mental acquisitions; personal refinements; social positions; and some even in present creature pleasures. The psalmist thought it to be in the favour of God. And he was right. Until man is in friendship with God he will never be happy. I. WHAT SORT IS IT? Not the creative favour of God, which has made us men, not brutes; not His providential favour, which has supplied our various needs—but His saving favour (Eph. ii. 4-7). That the psalmist had this favour of God in view, is evident from ver. 8. II. THROUGH WHAT MEDIUM DOES GOD EXERCISE HIS SAVING FAVOUR? Jesus Christ (John xvii. 2; Acts iv. 12; Rom. iii. 25, 26; 1 John v. 11). Jesus is to the regeneration of man what the atmosphere is to the fruitfulness of the earth—the medium through which the water of the ocean and the warmth of the sun act with generating power. III. WHERE IS THIS FACT REVEALED? (Deut. xviii. 15, 18; Luke xxiv. 27; John v. 39). This invests the Scriptures with indescribable grandeur, inestimable worth, exclusive authority, and final appeal in everything pertaining to human redemption. IV. TO WHOM IS IT PROCLAIMED? (John iii. 16; Luke ii. 10; Matt. ix. 13; Titus ii. 11-14). To limit Gospel invitations to a favoured few is unscriptural. V. WHAT WILL BE HAD BY SUITABLY REGARDING God's proclamation of His saving favour? "Life." That is, restoration to the moral likeness of God, reinstatement into right relations with God, and introduction into the real friendship of God. Viewed in regard to the law of God, it is called justification (Gal. iii. 6-14); the character of God, sanctification (Eph. v. 25-27); the person of God, fellowship (John xvii. 21; 1 John i. 3, 6, 7). All living is death which is not in God, nor like Him, nor according to His will. VI. BY WHAT EXERCISE OF THE MIND do we obtain the blessed issues of God's saving favour? Believing. (*W. J. Stuart.*) **Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.**—*Sorrow succeeded by joy:*—Day and night constitute the sum of human existence; they are emblematical of joy and sorrow. In figurative language, hope and joy are invariably clad in a vesture of light, whilst fear and grief are robed in sable. The language of our text cannot be applied to the trials and afflictions of the ungodly, but we would notice some of those occasions of weeping which may reasonably be expected to terminate in joy. Of this nature are—**I. THE TEARS THAT FLOW FROM CONVICTION OF SIN AND PENITENTIAL SORROW.** II. The grief that arises from CONSCIOUS BACKSLIDING, or from the upbraidings of a tender conscience. There is no feeling more oppressively painful than that of being a conscious traitor: and the anguish of the backslider is closely allied to this. Of whatever nature his sins may be, his profoundest grief will arise from their opposition to the Divine nature. "Against Thee, Thee only," etc. **III. Those that arise FROM THE SENSE OF SPIRITUAL DESERTION.** There are times when we "walk in darkness and have no light," and we receive no communications of grace to raise our drooping spirits. The light of God's countenance is withdrawn. But this loneliness of soul, this desolation of spirit, shall be removed, and the light shall again shine. **IV. THOSE CAUSED BY TEMPORAL AFFLICTIONS,** such as loss, bereavement, death. **Conclusion.** 1. Let the sentiment of the text preserve you from a gloomy despondency. 2. Disarm death of its terrors. 3. Let each individual ask himself, if he be interested in the truth of my text? Will the source of your weeping become a spring of joy? Can you reasonably expect it should be so? It all depends on your being at peace with God. How is it with you? (*S. Summers.*) *The two guests:*—There is an obvious antithesis in the first part of this verse, between "His anger" and "His favour." Probably there is a similar antithesis between "a moment" and "life." For, although the word rendered "life" does not usually mean a lifetime, it may have that signification, and the evident intention of contrast seems to require it here. So, then, the meaning of the first part of my text is, "the anger lasts for a moment; the favour lasts for a lifetime." The perpetuity of the one, and the brevity of the other, are the psalmist's thought. Then, if we pass to the second part of the text, you will observe that there is there also a double antithesis. "Weeping" is set over against "joy"; the "night" against the "morning." And the first of these two contrasts is the more striking if we observe that the word "joy" means, literally, "a joyful shout," so that the voice which was lifted in weeping is conceived of as now being heard in exultant praise. Then, still further, the expression "may endure" literally means "come to lodge." So that Weeping and Joy are personified. Two guests come; one, dark-robed and approaching at the fitting season for such, "the night." The other bright, coming with all things fresh and sunny, in the dewy morn. The guest of the night is Weeping; the guest that takes its place in the morning is Gladness.

The two clauses, then, of my text suggest substantially the same thought, and that is the persistence of joy and the transitoriness of sorrow. The whole is a leaf out of the psalmist's own experience. I. THE PROPORTION OF JOY AND SORROW IN AN ORDINARY LIFE. Now is it true—is it *not* true?—that, if a man rightly regards the proportionate duration of these two diverse elements in his life, he must come to the conclusion that the one is continuous and the other is but transitory? A thunderstorm is very short when measured against the long summer day in which it crashes; and very few days have them. It must be a bad climate where half the days are rainy. But then, man looks before and after, and has the terrible gift that by anticipation and by memory he can prolong the sadness. The proportion of solid matter needed to colour the Irwell is very little in comparison with the whole of the stream. But the current carries it, and half an ounce will stain miles of the turbid stream. Memory and anticipation beat the metal thin, and make it cover an enormous space. And the misery is that, somehow, we have better memories for sad hours than for joyful ones. So it comes to be a piece of very homely, well-worn, and yet always needful, practical counsel to try not to magnify and prolong grief, nor to minimize and abbreviate gladness. We can make our lives, to our own thinking, very much what we will. Courage, cheerfulness, thankfulness, buoyancy, resolution, are all closely connected with a sane estimate of the relative proportions of the bright and the dark in a human life. II. THE INCLUSION OF THE "MOMENT" IN THE "LIFE." I do not know that the psalmist thought of that when he gave utterance to my text, but whether he did it or not, it is true that the "moment" spent in "anger" is a part of the "life" that is spent in the "favour." Just as within the circle of a life lies each of its moments, the same principle of inclusion may be applied to the other contrast presented here. For as the "moment" is a part of the "life," the "anger" is a part of the love. The "favour" holds the "anger" within itself, for the true scriptural idea of that terrible expression and terrible fact, the "wrath of God," is that it is the necessary aversion of a perfectly pure and holy love from that which does not correspond to itself. So, though sometimes the two may be set against each other, yet at bottom, and in reality, they are one, and the "anger" is but a mode in which the "favour" manifests itself. Thus we come to the truth which breathes uniformity and simplicity through all the various methods of the Divine hand, that howsoever He changes and reverses His dealings with us they are one and the same. You may get two diametrically opposite motions out of the same machine. The same power will send one wheel revolving from right to left, and another from left to right, but they are co-operant to grind out at the far end the one product. It is the same revolution of the earth that brings blessed lengthening days and growing summer, and that cuts short the sun's course and brings declining days and increasing cold. It is the same motion which hurls a comet close to the burning sun, and sends it wandering away out into fields of astronomical space, beyond the ken of telescope, and almost beyond the reach of thought. And so one uniform Divine purpose, the favour which uses the anger, fills the life, and there are no interruptions, howsoever brief, to the steady continuous flow of His outpoured blessings. All is love and favour. Anger is masked love, and sorrow has the same source and mission as joy. It takes all sorts of weathers to make a year, and all tend to the same issue, of ripened harvests and full barns. III. THE CONVERSION OF THE SORROW INTO JOY. A prince comes to a poor man's hovel, is hospitably received in the darkness, and, being received and welcomed, in the morning slips off the rags and appears as he is. Sorrow is Joy disguised. If it be accepted, if the will submit, if the heart let itself be untwined, that its tendrils may be coiled closer round the heart of God, then the transformation is sure to come, and joy will dawn on those who have done rightly—that is, submissively and thankfully—by their sorrows. It will not be a joy like what the world calls joy—loud-voiced, boisterous, ringing with idiot laughter; but it will be pure, and deep, and sacred, and permanent. A white lily is better than a flaunting peony, and the joy into which sorrow accepted turns is pure and refining and good. But you may say, "Ah! there are two kinds of sorrows. There are those that can be cured, and there are those that *cannot*. What have you got to say to me who have to bleed from an immedicable wound till the end of my life?" Well, I have to say this—look beyond earth's dim dawns to that morning when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise. If we have to carry a load on an aching back till the end, be sure that when the night, which is far spent, is over, and the day, which is at

hand, hath broken, every raindrop will be turned into a flashing rainbow when it is smitten by the level light, and every sorrow rightly borne be represented by a special and particular joy. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Weeping and joy*:—The following are suggested by this passage. 1. God is love. David inscribed over the portal of his house, "His anger is but for a moment," etc. Did he not thus in broken and imperfect symbols speak out this truth of all truths that has been revealed from Calvary and the Ascension Mount, and which has been given to us that we may herald it to the world? "Herein is love, not that we loved God," etc. It is in the light of that revelation of love, that we are to read the riddles of our existence. It is in the light of that revelation, and that alone, that the clouds of our forebodings and our despondencies can be put to flight. God's government of the world, His providential ordering of the whole of the human race and of each individual life is for our everlasting good, and it is in accordance with His own nature of love. In that government nothing is forgotten; in that loving plan no heart has been left desolate. There is no deviation in the path of His intended progress; there is no friction in the Divine workings; for all things work together for good unto them that love God. 2. Another thing suggested by this passage is, that not only is His Divine anger consistent with Divine love, but given the fact that this love of God is love to free beings, to beings who are sinning continually, we may say that anger is absolutely essential to righteous love. God is the eternal righteousness as well as the eternal love. Calvary is the transcendent revelation to the world of the Divine love, but it is also the transcendent revelation of Divine righteousness. Because God is righteous God is angry. He is angry with the wicked, with corruption, impurity, cruelty, selfishness, falsehood, injustice, oppression, envy, hatred, murder, strife. What parent that truly loves his child will let that child flagrantly and persistently sin and not punish him? The rod is often a fitter emblem of love than a kiss. 3. These two visitors, Weeping and Joy, come instrumentally in the hands of God to the homes of a world that is being governed and directed by a righteous love. I do not say that Weeping is the messenger of God's anger, and that Joy, on the other hand, is the messenger of His love. They are both messengers of His will; they both subserve His redemptive purposes; both of them alike may be messengers of His anger, as both of them alike may be messengers of His love. But although we should regard them as symbolic figures severally of anger and of love, the experiences of human life, when the house is hushed with grief, when the heart is low, followed—as, blessed be God! they are followed—by days of gladness, by giving "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"—all this experience of life should remind us that in the lines along which God is working, the secret principles of His government by that which is good and by that which is painful, through Weeping and through Joy, through this strangely mingled experience of human life, He is slowly working out that great purpose and toward that great end, the eternal good of all His creatures. God's anger is special treatment for a critical hour; it is the probing of the wound; it is the changing, as it were, of the motive power in the secret nature of the soul; and it is only that we may remember that the Father of Spirits, in subjection to whom we live, is also the Ancient of Days and the Eternal Righteousness. But the Divine anger is transient. Anger will not keep; it is impossible that righteous anger can be kept; it is like the coal dropped hot from the furnace that cools every moment. Such is the anger of a righteous, loving being. It is not hatred and enmity and jealousy, but it is anger, a frown which, when the child sees, passes into a smile of paternal tenderness and love. (R. B. Brindley.) *A lyric of deliverance*:—I. THE DIRGE OF GRIEF—"Weeping . . . night." See how sorrow and night are linked. Life is this night. 1. A brief night. 2. A wild night sometimes. 3. A sorrowful night oftentimes. 4. But a night fringed with light, on this side and on that; and so the dirge has its consoling strain. II. THE LYRIC OF DELIVERANCE—"Joy . . . morning." See how gladness and light are joined together. 1. In the morning of clearer knowledge. 2. In the morning of purer character. 3. In the morning of eternity. (R. C. Cowell.) *The joy of Easter*:—The associations we have with Easter are very various, but, for most of us, it represents more than anything else a great revulsion of feeling. The change from Good Friday to Easter Day is much more abrupt than any in the Christian year. It is like the sharp descent from the clear cold air of the Upper Alps into the rich and sunny plains of Italy, and it reminds us of earthly vicissitudes like that of the sovereign, who being imprisoned and expecting immediate execution, is placed by a sudden revolution

on the throne of his ancestors. David's words do not exaggerate the Easter feeling. The words describe the experience of David on more than one occasion. He had known one peril and then great deliverance. And such a morning as the text tells of was that first Resurrection morning for the disciples. We may say they ought not to have been in such heaviness because Jesus had so plainly and repeatedly told them of what would take place. Of His death and resurrection He had told them again and again. And yet, when they saw Him dead upon the Cross they were filled with an almost unimaginable disappointment. How is this to be explained? Human nature is naturally an optimist. Face to face with forecasts of trouble, it resists their reality and their force, it makes the best of them it can. They will not see what they do not wish to see. And so it was with our Lord and His disciples. Hence Peter's word, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee,"—as though the prophecy of His Passion had been an utterance of morbid pessimism. And thus it was that when the last tragedy took place it found them unprepared. This was the heaviness which the first disciples had to endure. But what a joy came to them in the morning, as first on one and then on another there fell the rays of the rising Sun of Righteousness! And such a morning it will be when the Christian, having passed the gate of death, attains to a joyful resurrection. And ours will bear the pattern of our Lord's. True, for Him there was no such interval between death and resurrection as there must be for us: and for Him there was no corruption, whilst for us there will be. But at length soul and body shall be joined together again and for ever. That the soul survives the body might be inferred from the law of the conservation of force or energy in the physical universe. For is there no energy but that of the substances which are known to chemistry? Are not thought, will, love, truly energies: as much so as any that we can identify with chemical elements? But how and in what shape does this spiritual energy survive? It must be in some form strictly personal, or else our personality ceases to be, and the soul is virtually annihilated. Physical force exists independently of the subject to whose life it belongs. But not so with spiritual force. We have no knowledge of it apart from the person in whom it is found. Therefore if the soul exists at all it must retain its personality. And all this is not mere metaphysic, but it is a practical question for the heart. Who that has loved and lost some dear one does not know how intensely real this question is. And let none think that to be absorbed in the ocean of universal life is something more noble than to retain our personal life. It is not so. There can be no joy in the annihilation of personality. To suppress self is good, but that is quite another thing from the annihilation of personality. Hence the value of the truth of the resurrection of the body, since it asserts so emphatically our enduring personality. And thus all anxieties as to the recognition of friends are set at rest. Joy will come through such recognition, in the morning. Yes, but to whom? To those who have learned the moral and spiritual as well as the physical meaning of the resurrection. There are two nights which hang heavily in the life of men—that of sorrow and that of sin. But through Christ our Lord each of them may be followed by a morning of joy. (Canon Liddon.) *The uninvited stranger and the welcome guest*:—The picture is a very striking one. In the evening Weeping, like a darkly veiled stranger, enters our dwelling, making all sorrowful by his unwelcome presence, but he comes only to sojourn for a night. In the morning another guest appears—Joy—like a rescuing angel, before whom Weeping disappears. I. IN THE CASE OF THE GODLY, THE TEARFUL NIGHT OF AFFLICTION WILL BE FOLLOWED BY THE JOYFUL MORNING OF DELIVERANCE AND GOD'S RETURNING FAVOUR. We have here a figurative allusion to the way in which God had dealt with the psalmist and often deals with His people. His favour had been withdrawn, His displeasure manifested, but it was only for a moment, which moment is contrasted with the whole life gladdened with His smile. How often in the history of the Church have we seen the dark night of affliction succeeded by the bright morning of a glorious and triumphant deliverance! The darkest hour immediately preceding the dawn! For a while God seems to forget His people, to be deaf to their cry: He is only waiting for the set time to deliver; and the moment the fittest, the only fit time arrives, we see the morning succeed the night, and Joy take the place of Weeping. We see precisely the same thing in God's dealings with individuals. The night of affliction falls upon them, the unwelcome stranger, Weeping, takes up his abode with them, their plans are traversed, their hopes are blighted, their house is rendered desolate. Well! it is their privilege to believe, not only that these

painful circumstances will be overruled for good, but that the darkness of affliction's night shall be succeeded by the brightness of a joyful morning. It is so often here, but whether so here or not, it will be so by and by. II. THE TEARFUL NIGHT OF LIFE WILL BE SUCCEEDED BY THE TEARLESS AND ETERNAL DAY OF HEAVEN. We wait for the dawning of that day. We have the beginnings of heaven's light and joy, here and now; the promise and earnest of them. We have passed from darkness to light, the Day-spring from on high hath visited us; and though we dwell in the dimness of early dawn, we are the children of the light. We should seek to walk in the light, walk as children of the light. (*T. M. Morris.*) *The two guests*:—I. **WEeping**. It is at even that she comes to all our homes. When she enters, we close the shutters, and very often put out the candle, and in the glow of the dying embers on the hearth talk to her a while. 1. Weeping is sure to come to us when the shadow of death rests upon our home. She tells us that there seldom was a home so dark as ours, or a trial so great; that such a loss can never be fully made up; that now we are only just beginning to find out what life is. 2. Weeping comes in times of adversity and anxious care. With pensive countenance and in sad tones she says that Providence is full of mystery, and that in all ages she has known some of the best people who were thus sadly perplexed. She tells us that she well remembers how Asaph long ago used to say (*Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2, 5, 13*). She reminds us how David, too, and other saints felt the same burden of mystery, and adds that no one has ever found the solution. She is not surprised that we are troubled; we well might be. 3. Weeping comes in those trying hours when friendships disappoint us and close and tender relationships become strained. She suggests that human nature is, notwithstanding all its professions, selfish and untrustworthy; that the exclamation of the psalmist is, sooner or later, the exclamation of all who have known much of the world and its ways: "Put not your trust in princes," etc. 4. Weeping is sure to come to us in the hour of our humiliation and shame. In the dim glimmer of the fire on the hearth she brings to our notice stains on our garment which, she assures us, would look a thousand times worse if we saw them in the proper light—saw them as others see them; and, above all, as God sees them. II. **WEeping VANISHES OUT OF SIGHT IN THE GREY LIGHT OF DAWN, AND JOY enters our dwelling**. The blinds are drawn up again, the fire is rekindled upon the hearth; and then, in the growing light of day that streams through the window, Joy talks to us a while. We repeat to her what Weeping has told us, and Joy replies that Weeping is a true teacher, that it is her prerogative to utter many a truth which only she can teach, but that she overlooks others none the less important. 1. For instance, that in speaking to us of our bereavement as a loss for which nothing can compensate, she forgot to tell us of the meeting again; of the memory of that dear one which will be to us a life-long inspiration; of the upward direction which such a bereavement should give to our thoughts and aspirations; and of how it may be one of God's ways of uniting us to Himself by associating His home with ours. 2. Again, Joy reminds us that when Weeping spoke of affliction as being the mystery which has perplexed God's saints in all the ages, and of how she had heard Asaph say, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," etc. (*Ps. lxxiii. 2-13*), she forgot to tell us the rest that Asaph said: how that he began the psalm with, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart"; and how that, further on, in speaking of the prosperity of the wicked, he exclaims (*vers. 18-20 and 25, 26*). "She forgot to tell you, too," adds Joy, "what another psalmist said (*Ps. cxix. 67*). "Yes," continues Joy, "Weeping is a good teacher, but she has a poor memory for aught that is joyous; she only remembers the sad." 3. Joy pauses, and then, with a still brighter glow upon her countenance, and a clearer ring in her voice, she continues, "And when Weeping spoke to you of your sin, she gave you but half the truth. When she told you that you could never remove the stains of sin which God saw upon your garment, she forgot to say that 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth,' etc. (*D. Davies.*) *Sorrow*:—Among the things on view at the Stanley Exhibition, held in London a few years ago, was a small MS. volume which will always be associated with the memory of an Englishman who went to the Dark Continent not to indulge a love of sport, or travel, or adventure, nor yet in order to make a fortune, but to preach the religion of Jesus Christ. The book was Bishop Hannington's diary. The handwriting, you may remember, was small and closely written, after the manner of a traveller who must get as much as

possible into a small compass. And this was the entry on the last page, the last that the Bishop ever made: "I can hear no news, but was hold up by Psalm xxx., which came with great power. A hyena howled near me last night, smelling a sick man, but I hope he is not to have me yet." The date of that entry was October 20, 1885, and it shows how the psalms are full of religious power, fit for every-day use even in our own time. Time and knowledge would fail one to tell of all the saints of God who have been helped by the 30th Psalm. Even at the stake, when the faggots have been piled all about, and fetters have weighted every limb, martyrs for the faith have sung with unflinching voices its promises of sure and certain hope, and have passed away joyfully with its words upon their lips. One such was John Herwin, who suffered during Alva's persecutions of the Netherlandish Protestants. "At the place of execution," writes the chronicler of the time, "one gave him his hand and comforted him." Then "began he to sing the 30th Psalm"; and the 30th Psalm, in spite of interruptions, he sang through from beginning to end. (*E. H. Eland, M.A.*) *Weeping and Joy*:—Lo! there comes hitherward, as though making for the door of our house, a dark form. She is slightly bent, but not with age. She has a pale face, her step is languid, like one who has travelled far and is weary; and her tears flow so fast that she cannot wipe them away. Our hearts begin to beat as we watch her coming. Will she pass, or will she stay? "I am a pilgrim," quoth she; "will you lodge me for the night? I am sad, I am weary, for I go round all the world. There are few houses I do not enter, and in some I make a long stay. You ask me for my name. I bear it in my countenance: my name is 'Weeping.' You wish to see my credentials? It is sufficient that none have been able to keep me outside a door inside of which I wished to be; and I know that, notwithstanding your beating hearts, you will not be inhospitable; you will take me in." "Yes, for a little, to refresh you, to dry your tears if we can; and then to bid you farewell." "Nay, I can make no stipulation; I go where I am sent, I depart at the appointed time!" And now "Weeping" has her chamber in the house. And the blinds are drawn down, and hearts are hushed, and feet tread lightly; and, listening all night through, we hear sighs, and sometimes almost sobs, from the chamber where "Weeping" lies sleepless. And we, too, are sleepless and anxious, and one and another find the tears flowing down their own cheeks as the night goes on; and the house is all full of pain and fear, as the dark thought begins to take shape that she may have come to make a long stay. We are up betimes, for now we are amongst them "that watch for the morning." Some flush of it is in the eastern sky, "and see," we say to each other, "it is beginning to gild yon mountain peaks, and to flow down into the valleys," when, hearing some footsteps approaching—lo! there comes one whose step is elastic, whose form is graceful, who bears the dawn on his countenance, who sheds light around him as he walks. Again our hearts begin to beat, but this time it is with fear that he will not stay. "I am a pilgrim," quoth he; "I have been long on the road; I can walk through the darkest night and not stumble; I have come to you this morning with the dawn, and I wish to stay." Ah, welcome indeed! if we knew where to give thee room; we have but one guest-chamber, and it is occupied. There came to us last night a poor pilgrim named 'Weeping,' who for the first hours of night sighed and wept so sorely that it seemed as if she were breathing her life away. For the last two hours she seems to have fallen on sleep, for her chamber is silent, and it would be cruel to awake her." "Weeping? ah, I know her well. My name is Joy. Weeping and Joy have had the world between them since the world was made. But, now, look in your room. You will find it empty. I met her an hour ago on the other side of the hill. She told me she had slipped silently away, and that I would be just in time to smile good-morning to you from my bright face, while she went on her way towards the valley of Baca, and the deeper, darker valley of the shadow of death. Weeping will not come here again to-night, and I shall stay, or I shall leave some of the light of my presence to fill the house. We often meet, and always part. But there is a time coming, in the Land of Light, from which I come, when even she will not know how to weep. "For the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

Vers. 6-12. *In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.*—*The conditions and acts of life, the springs of solemn issues*:—These verses may be taken as indicating the tendencies of certain conditions and actions in human life.



1. Here is **HUMAN PROSPERITY LEADING TO PRESUMPTION**. The writer's experience agrees with that of Job (Job xxix. 18). Also with the experience of the rich man in the Gospel, who said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." 1. This tendency implies moral perversity. Our religious feelings should get purer and stronger as our mercies abound. Sad it is, therefore, to see prosperity leading to presumption and impiety. 2. This tendency should modify our desire for wealth. Worldly wealth, at best, is only a temporary good, and often an evil in disguise. II. Here is **AFFLICTION LEADING TO PRAYER**. 1. The description of affliction. It is the hiding of God's face. 2. The nature of his prayer. (1) Vehement (1 Chron. xxi. 16, 17). (2) Argumentative. He reasons with the Almighty (ver. 9). He means that his destruction would be of no service to the Almighty, but that his preservation might be. III. Here is **PRAYER LEADING TO DELIVERANCE**. In answer to earnest prayer, the Great Father has ever given to the suffering suppliant beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. 1. God removes suffering. "Thou hast put off my sackcloth." 2. God gives happiness. "And girded me with gladness." IV. Here is **DELIVERANCE LEADING TO PRAISE**. 1. This was the purpose of his deliverance. "To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee." He was delivered that he might praise. 2. This was the influence of his deliverance. "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever." (*Homilist.*) *The proper improvement of prosperity and adversity*:—The subject of the psalmist's complaint in these words is a common weakness, incident to human nature; a too great confidence in the day of prosperity, and excessive dejection in a time of trouble. I. **WHAT IT IS THAT CHIEFLY CONTRIBUTES TO THIS EXTREME DIVERSITY OF TEMPER UNDER THE VARYING SCENES OF LIFE**. 1. It is sometimes owing, in a good measure, to the native turn and temper of the mind. Some are of so soft and flexible a make, that they are soon impressed: almost everything affects them too much. 2. That which chiefly contributes to this great reverse of temper under the vicissitudes of life, I conceive to be an excessive fondness for earthly enjoyments. Did we not set our hearts upon these things, we should meet with fewer disappointments from them. 3. Our ignorance, or inconsideration of the true nature of present things, as (1) unsatisfying; (2) uncertain. 4. A want of faith, which would teach us to look beyond these things to the final issue of the great all-wise Disposer of them. II. **WHAT DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES ATTEND SUCH AN INEQUALITY OF MIND**. 1. It lays us exposed to all the temptations of that state of life, into which Providence hath brought us. (1) A man that is secure, carnal and confident in prosperity, lies wholly exposed to all the snares and temptations incident to that state of life: which are such as these; pride, worldly-mindedness, self-indulgence, vanity, avarice, intemperance, contempt of others, self-sufficiency, oppression, irreligion, or, at least, a great indifference to sacred things. (2) A succumbency and dejection of mind in adversity lays us exposed to all the dangers and temptations of that condition. And the sins, to which men are most inclined in this state of life, are envy at the prosperity of others, murmuring, impatience, discontent, uncharitableness, passion, fearfulness and despair. 2. It deprives us of all the advantages we might derive from these states. (1) An elate and careless frame of mind in prosperity deprives us of the chief benefits that might accrue to us from thence: or, in other words, it prevents our blessings from being sanctified. For how can those blessings be sanctified to us which we are not thankful for? And how can we be thankful for those blessings for which we are forgetful of our dependence on Providence? (2) An excessive grief and despondency in tribulation is attended with effects no less detrimental; as it deprives us of all those advantages we might reap from our troubles. Afflictions are often sent as the greatest mercies; to make us more meek, resigned, patient, humble, holy and heavenly-minded; to purify our hearts, wean us from the world, and mortify our sensual affections; and to revive and cultivate a spiritual, watchful and dependent frame of mind. But how can afflictions be sanctified to these happy purposes, when the mind is tossed with tempestuous sorrow, or faints under the stroke, incapable of forming one right, or regular reflection? III. **WHAT CONSIDERATIONS ARE MOST PROPER TO BALANCE THE PASSIONS, AND GIVE US A SELF-POSSESSION UNDER ALL PROVIDENTIAL OCCURRENCES**. 1. Let us often think of the natural inconstancy of all earthly things. (1) Are there not a thousand secret and unforeseen ways, whereby the hand of God can suddenly take from us all our earthly comforts, or our capacity to enjoy them? How vain, then, is a confident spirit in a day of prosperity.

(2) Are our souls involved in darkness? and our minds disconsolate, and bowed down, under the pressure of some grievous affliction? let us remember, that the day succeeds the night (ver. 5). Time cures all our earthly sorrows; and grace alleviates them. Let this sanctify, what that will entirely remove. 2. Let us look forward to the end of things, and endeavour to familiarize to ourselves the thoughts of futurity. 3. Let us ever keep our eye fixed on God, as the all-wise and sovereign Disposer of those things; and remember, that whatever befalls us, comes either by His permission or direction. 4. Let us think how much we offend our Maker by indulging in that weak unguarded temper now described. 5. Let us consider how much we lose the relish of our mercies by being too secure and fond of them in prosperity; and how we increase our load by sinking under it in adversity. 6. Let us learn to be more cautious in prosperity, and more composed in adversity, and endeavour after more equanimity in both. (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *The perils of prosperity*.—Fox quaintly said of the elder Pitt that he “fell up-stairs” when he was elevated to the peerage. Many a man cannot stand going up higher. He becomes haughty, proud; he affects dignity, he lords it over God’s heritage; he becomes too big with conscious superiority. Like Jeshurun, he waxes fat and kicks. He falls up-stairs; up, not down. (*A. S. Pierson, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. *Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.*—*The withdrawal of the Divine presence*.—Of all the sources of sorrow to which a good man is exposed here, there is none whose waters are so bitter, nor whose grief is so poignant, as the withdrawal of the Divine presence. But there is one practical benefit to be derived from it; it affords additional evidence of our real state before God. If we can endure the absence of God’s favourable presence from our souls without sorrow, our love to Him cannot be genuine. I. *THE EXTENT OF THIS WITHDRAWAL.* We speak not of His withdrawal from the unconverted—but from the real child of God. 1. It does not include the withdrawal of His loving-kindness. Indeed, the very act of withdrawal is prompted by love. 2. It does not include the withdrawal of the real presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit may not reflect the shining of God’s love upon the believer’s soul, and yet He may, at the same time, so work in his heart, as to make his faith lively; his desires strong; his conscience tender; and his life fruitful. 3. This withdrawal may be experienced in different degrees by different Christians, and by the same Christians at different times and under different circumstances. With some it is only a cloudy day; with others it is twilight, neither dark nor light; with some the Sun of Righteousness is overcast, with others He appears to be totally eclipsed. II. *WHEN GOD MAY BE SAID TO HIDE HIS FACE.* 1. When He does not interpose on their behalf, and though He sees them in trouble does not step forward to their relief. 2. When He removes from His people the symbols of His presence—the ordinances and sacraments of religion. 3. When His people do not prize the means of grace, and when their profiting does not appear. 4. When He denies His people access to Himself, and breaks off communion with them. III. *THE REASONS OF THIS HIDING.* 1. When Christians commit gross sins, and bring a disgrace upon religion, then God hides His face from them, to show to them His displeasure, and to show to the world that the falls and sins of professors are not to be attributed to, neither to be charged upon, his religion. 2. When Christians become earthly-minded, and begin to prefer possessions, delights, and engagements of the world to Jesus and His great salvation, then God hides His face from them. 3. When Christians grow formal, cold, and lifeless in their religious duties, then God frequently hides His face from them. It is the lively, active, zealous, spiritual worshipper, with whom God has engaged to dwell. 4. When Christians neglect the great medium of access to God, the Lord Jesus Christ, then Jehovah resents the insult offered to His Son by hiding His face. IV. *THE SPIRIT TO BE EXERCISED IN THESE SEASONS OF DESERTION.* “I was troubled.” This implies—1. That we are truly sensible of our loss, of our sin, and of the fearful consequences that must inevitably follow a continuance of this state of things. 2. That we recognize the presence of God as the only permanent source of comfort and happiness. 3. That we exert all the powers and faculties of our souls to recover the presence and favour of God. For this purpose we should use all the appointed means of grace. In all duties and ordinances our souls should follow hard after Him, and pursue Him closely from one ordinance to another till we find Him. V. *WHY CHRISTIANS ARE THUS TROUBLED AT THE HIDING OF HIS FACE.* 1. Because of the blessings they have lost. 2. Because of the positive evils that always

attend this withdrawal of God's favourable presence from the soul. (1) Spiritual darkness. (2) Spiritual deadness and insensibility. (3) Failure in all spiritual duties. (4) Barrenness of soul. (5) Exposure to dangers and temptations. (6) A dread of God's displeasure. (7) The fear of final rejection. (8) Melancholy thought of death and judgment. VI. PRACTICAL LESSONS AND CAUTIONS. 1. How few are true believers. 2. How awful is the condition of unconverted men. 3. How awful is the state of the backslider. 4. How happy are the people of God. (W. Gregory.)

Vers. 11, 12. **Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.**—*Easter joy*:—Here is described a change, complete, and more or less sudden, from sadness to joy. David has escaped a danger which had brought him very near to death; and now he is thankful and exultant. His words are in keeping with what Christians feel, as they pass from the last days of Holy Week into the first hours of Easter. If Easter is associated predominantly with any one emotion, it is with that of joy. And thus, ever since, the Church of Christ has laboured to make the Easter festival, beyond all others, the feast of Christian joy. All that nature and art could furnish has been summoned to express, so far as outward things may, this overmastering emotion of Christian souls worshipping at the tomb of their Risen Lord. All the deliverances of God's ancient people, from Egypt, from Assyria, from Babylon, are but rehearsals of the great deliverance of all on the Resurrection morning; and each prophet and psalmist that heralds any of them, sounds in Christian ears some separate note of the Resurrection hymn. And this, the joy which fills the soul of the believing Church on Easter Day, has some sort of echo in the world outside; so that those who sit loosely to our faith and hope, and who worship rarely, if ever, before our altars, yet feel that good spirits are somehow in order on Easter morning. For their sakes, as for our own, let us try to take the emotion to pieces, as we find it in a Christian soul; let us ask why it is so natural for Christians to say, this day, with David, "Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." I. The first reason, then, for this Easter joy is **THE TRIUMPH AND SATISFACTION ENJOYED BY OUR LORD HIMSELF**. We follow Him in the stages of His sufferings and death. We sympathize reverently with the awful sorrows of our Adorable Lord and Friend; and thus we enter, in some far-off way, into the sense of triumph, unspeakable and sublime, which follows beyond it. It is His triumph; that is the first consideration; His triumph, who was but now so cruelly insulted and tortured. It is all over now; by a single motion of His Majestic Will, He is risen. And we, as we kneel before Him, think, first of all, of Him. It is His joy which inspires ours; it turns our heaviness into joy, and puts off our sorrow and girds us with gladness. Do I say this is the case? Perhaps it were more prudent to say that it ought to be. For in truth the habit of getting out of and forgetting our miserable selves in the absorbing sense of the beauty and magnificence of God, belongs rather to ancient than to modern Christianity. To those old Christians God was all, man nothing, or well-nigh nothing. Theirs was a disinterested interest in God. With us, we are too prone to value God, not so much for His own sake as for ours. Be it yours to show that my misgiving is unwarranted. You know that pure sympathy with an earthly friend's happiness leaves altogether out of consideration the question whether it contributes anything to your own; and in like manner endeavour to say to-day to your Heavenly Friend: "It is because Thou, Lord Jesus, hast vanquished Thine enemies, hast overcome death, and hast entered into Thy glory, that Thou hast turned my Lenten heaviness into joy, and put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness." II. **BECAUSE OF THE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD INVIGORATES OUR GRASP OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH**. The mind loves to rest truth on a secure basis. This is what the old Roman poet meant by saying that the man was really happy who had attained to know the causes of things. The chemist who has at last explained the known effect of a particular drug, by laying bare, upon analysis, an hitherto undiscovered property in it; the historian who has been enabled to show that the conjecture of years rests on the evidence of a trustworthy document; the mathematician on whom has flashed the formula which solves some problem that has long haunted and eluded him; the anatomist who has been able to refer what he had hitherto regarded as an abnormal occurrence to the operation of a recognized law;—these men know what joy is. Now, akin to the joy of students and workers is the satisfaction of a Christian

when he steadily dwells on the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian Creed is like a tower which rears towards heaven its windows and pinnacles in successive stages of increasing gracefulness. We lavish our admiration first on this detail of it, and then on that; and, while we thus study and admire, we dwell continuously in its upper stories, till at last perhaps a grave question occurs or is suggested to us. What does it all rest upon? What is the foundation-fact on which this structure has been reared in all its august and fascinating beauty? What fact, if removed, would be fatal to it? And the answer is—our Lord's Resurrection is one such fact. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead. Yes; it is here, beside the empty tomb of the Risen Jesus, that Christian faith feels itself on the hard rock of fact; here we break through the tyranny of matter and sense, and rise with Christ into the immaterial world; here we put a term to the enervating alternation of guesses and doubts which prevails elsewhere, and we reach the frontier of the absolutely certain. And we can but answer, Truly, Lord Jesus, by Thy Resurrection Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness. III. And because of THE ASSURANCE IT GIVES OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION. Paganism could only guess and speculate as to the immortality of the soul. It is the Gospel which gives certainty; it has unveiled the immortality of man in his completeness, in body and in soul. Thus shall we recognize our friends in heaven, for they shall wear there the features and the expression which they wore on earth. "All men shall rise with their bodies." Joyfully, therefore, do we think of the blessed dead. (*Canon Liddon.*) **Girded me with gladness.**—*Elevation of feeling:*—For the expression and manifestation of the state in which we are, God has made a rich provision of power. The forehead, the eye, the mouth, the whole face, the hands, the arms, the gait, and especially the voice, are so many instruments and agents of expression; and we are not true to ourselves, we are false to our condition, we are disloyal to God, when we clothe ourselves with a uniform reticence and unexpressiveness of demeanour. The clouds drop their blackness and appear brilliantly coloured and gorgeously gilded when the sun shines on them. The sea casts off its leaden hue and is covered with crisped smiles when the storm is over. The battle-field absorbs the blood which, in the day of war, is spilt on its bosom, and exhibits lovely flowers, or verdant pasture, or golden corn. The earth casts off her winterly attire and puts on her summerly vestments when "the time of the singing of birds has come." In like manner there is in human life and experience the turning of mourning into dancing; the putting off of sackcloth and the girding with gladness. (*S. Martin.*) *Praise continuous:*—One summer day I watched a lark rise from a field, and I listened with almost rapture to its unequalled song. The bird rose in successive stages, singing while rising and singing while resting, and the last ascent it made caused it to appear like a speck on the blue sky, an almost imperceptible spring of sweet music in the heavens. Nothing appeared wanting to complete the scene but the opening of the heavenly gates to receive this minister of song, that its sacrifice of sweetest sounds might be laid on the altar of God. But while thinking of this consummation the bird began to descend, falling rapidly in successive stages until near the earth, and then flying horizontally until it was lost in its nest. Does not the ascent and descent of this favourite songster represent our praise to God? Our glory is not always silent. We do sometimes sing praise to our God, and we rise into glorious elevations of feeling and of thought. But if we rise high in the morning, we fall low before noon; if we ascend on the Lord's day, we sink low on other days. A day will come in which there shall be a final putting off of sackcloth, and a final girding with gladness; and in that day silence shall be broken for ever, and our eternal life shall be one eternal psalm and service of praise. (*Ibid.*)

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### PSALM XXXI.

VERs. 1-8. **In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.**—*Man trusting in Jehovah:*—**I.** Here is man trusting in Jehovah IN GREAT TRIALS. 1. It seems strange that

God should allow a man who trusts in Him to become involved in trials. Love is the reason. He knows that even the best of His children are so fractious and wayward that they need the chastening rod. 2. It seems strange that a man should be able to trust God when in trial. Good men can, and have done so. Job: Paul. II. Here is man trusting in Jehovah and EARNESTLY PRAYING—1. For the vindication of his trust. 2. For deliverance from trial. 3. For an audience with the Almighty. 4. For protection from danger. 5. For guidance in perplexity. 6. For extrication from the snares of enemies. III. Here is man trusting in Jehovah and SURRENDERING HIMSELF. 1. The language of dedication. 2. The motive—gratitude. IV. Here is man trusting in Jehovah and ABHORRING SINNERS. A God-loving soul must ever recoil with profound disgust from the false, the dishonest, the mean, the profane, whenever or wherever they appear. The soul cannot love moral opposites. To hate characters, however, does not necessarily imply the hating of man. Man's bad character is of himself, he made it: but his nature is of God, He formed it. V. Here is man trusting in Jehovah, and REJOICING IN DELIVERANCE. 1. When deliverance comes to a good man, it comes from mercy. 2. The soul in deliverance rejoices in its freedom and security. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 2-3. **Be Thou my strong rock, . . . for Thou art my rock.**—"Be . . . for Thou art":—It sounds strange logic, "Be . . . for Thou art," and yet it is the logic of prayer, and goes very deep, pointing out both its limits and its encouragements. If we were to read thus: "Be Thou a strong Rock to me, for a house, a fortress, for Thou art my Rock and my Fortress," we should get the whole force of the parallelism. Of course the main idea is that of the "Rock," and "Fortress" is only an exposition of one phase of the meaning of that metaphor. I. **WHAT GOD IS.** "A rock, a fortress-house." What is the force of that metaphor? 1. Stable being is the first thought in it, for there is nothing that is more absolutely the type of unchangeableness and steadfast continuance. God the Unchangeable rises, like some majestic cliff, round the foot of which rolls for ever the tide of human life, and round which is littered the successive layers of the leaves of many summers. 2. Then besides this stable being, and the consequences of it, is the other thought which is attached to the emblem in Scripture, and that is defence. "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." When the floods are out, and all the plain is being dissolved into mud, the dwellers on it fly to the cliffs. "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." 3. But the Rock is a defence in another way. If a hard-pressed fugitive is brought to a stand and can set his back against a rock, he can front his assailants, secure that no unseen foe shall creep up behind and deal a stealthy stab and that he will not be surrounded unawares. II. **OUR PLEA WITH GOD, FROM WHAT HE IS.** "Be Thou to me a Rock . . . for Thou art a Rock." Is that not illogical? No, for notice that little word "to me"—be Thou to me what Thou art in Thyself, and hast been to all generations." That makes all the difference. It is not merely "Be what Thou art," although that would be much, but it is "be it to me," and let me have all which is meant in that great Name. But then, beyond that, let me point out to you how this prayer suggests to us that all true prayer will keep itself within God's Revelation of what He is. III. **THE PLEA WITH GOD DRAWN FROM WHAT WE HAVE TAKEN HIM TO BE TO US.** "Be Thou to me a strong Rock, for Thou art my Rock and my Fortress." What does that mean? It means that the suppliant has, by his own act of faith, taken God for his; that he has appropriated the great Divine revelation, and made it his own. Now a man by faith encloses a bit of the common for his very own. When God says that He "so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son," I should say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." When the great revelation is made that He is the Rock of Ages, my faith says: "My Rock and my Fortress." Having said that, and claimed Him for mine, I can then turn round to Him and say, "Be to me what I have taken Thee to be." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **For Thy name's sake lead me and guide me.**—*Divine guidance and leading:*—What a helpless, hopeless thing would a ship be, launched forth upon the deep without a helm, and without a pilot; how it would be drifted about by every current, and tossed to and fro by every wind and wave; how speedily it must be driven amid the shoals, or dashed upon the rocks. No better is man, launched forth on the waves of this troublesome world. Without a Divine helmsman, how must he inevitably be drifted into danger, and betrayed into ruin, if he follows his own wit, and will, and

wisdom! The very essence of all Christian life is to walk by faith and not by sight, and the very essence of Divine wisdom in heaven-taught man is to "trust in the Lord" with all his might, and not to trust in himself, not to trust in his own understanding. How appropriate, then, is this prayer for us all. I. **THE PETITION.** "Lead me and guide me." It implies—1. That a man feels that he cannot guide himself. 2. That he believes God does interpose in the affairs of men, and that He condescends to guide and lead all who trust in Him. 3. Expectation that God will direct us. Some pray but never wait for the answer. 4. And there must be leading as well as guiding. II. **THE PLEA.** Some plead that they do their best: but they do not. This is the true plea—"Thy name's sake," God's gracious character. It is a believer's prayer. God's providence, word, and spirit will make plain to us our way. Let us each adopt this prayer. (*Hugh Stowell.*)

**Ver. 5. Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.**—*The last words of Christ on the Cross* (with Luke xxiii. 46; Acts vii. 59):—I. I invite you first to consider our SAVIOUR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." 1. Observe how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God. Christ was a grand original thinker, and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for "never man spake like this Man." Yet the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form. You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. It was food to Him, as it is to us; and if He thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? 2. Notice that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God. We have far too much fiction in religion, and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts. Is God as real to thee as thou art to thyself? Come now; dost thou speak with Him "as a man speaketh unto his friend"? Canst thou trust Him, and rely upon Him as thou dost trust and rely upon the partner of thy bosom? If thy God be unreal, thy religion is unreal. 3. Observe how Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God. The psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in spirit he often did; but Jesus had the right to alter the psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Thine hand I commit My spirit"; but He said, "Father." Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!" 4. From this passage we learn that our Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die. "No man taketh it from Me," said He concerning His life; "I lay it down of Myself;" and there is here a cheerful willingness to yield up His spirit into His Father's hands. It is rather remarkable that none of the evangelists describe our Lord as dying. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost,—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die; but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death was an act; and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and hell; so, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death. But, oh, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, let us be perfectly ready to give it up. When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father, and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord," "My Father," "let Him do as seemeth Him good." II. My second text (Ps. xxxi. 5) is evidently the passage which our Saviour had in His mind just then: "Into Thine hand I commit My spirit: Thou hast redeemed Me, O Lord God of truth." It seems to me that THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE, for this psalm is not so much concerning the believer's death as concerning his life. 1. Let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God, and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Are you always doing this? 2. Notice that our second text has these words at the end of it: "Thou hast redeemed Me, O Lord God of truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you, and therefore you belong to Him. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Thine hand I commit my spirit." Nuy, not only every day, but all through the day. Have you to go into a house

where there is fever; I mean, is it your duty to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Thine hand I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

III. My third text (Acts vii. 59) is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOUR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. 1. If we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality. An infidel once said to a Christian man, "Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated, and therefore all fear of death is gone from me." "Yes," said the Christian man, "and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bullock grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any hope?" "Hope, sir? No, I have no hope; of course, I have no hope, sir." "Ah, then!" replied the other, "despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up." And that hope is, that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ's hands,—shall be "for ever with the Lord." 2. To a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near,—so near that the man speaks to Him, and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 3. There is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands. 4. There is the other certainty, that He is quite willing to take us into His hands. (C. H. Spurgeon.) "Into Thy hands":—This psalm is the heart-cry of a man in great trouble, surrounded by all sorts of difficulties, with his very life threatened. He was down in the very depths of darkness, and ringed about by all sorts of enemies at that moment. "Into Thine hands I commit my spirit," as a man standing in the midst of enemies, and bearing some precious treasure in his hand might, with one strong cast of his arm, fling it into the open hand of some mighty helper, and so baulk the enemies of their prey. I. WHERE TO LODGE A SOUL FOR SAFE KEEPING. "Into Thine hands"—a banker has a strong room, and a wise man sends his securities and his valuables to the bank and takes an acknowledgment, and goes to bed at night, quite sure that no harm will come to them, and that he will get them when he wants them. And that is exactly what the psalmist does here. He deposits his most precious treasure in the safe custody of One who will take care of it. The great hand is stretched out, and the little soul is put into it. 1. Trusting Him for the salvation of our souls. Take your stand on the fact, and with emancipated and buoyant hearts, and grateful ones, work from it, and because of it. 2. Trusting Him in reference to daily life, and all its difficulties and duties. The act of trust is to run through everything that we undertake and everything that we have to fight with. Self-will wrenches our souls out of God's hands. A man that sends his securities to the banker can get them back when he likes. And if we undertake to manage our own affairs, or fling ourselves into our work without recognition of our dependence upon Him, or if we choose our work without seeking to know what His will is, that is recalling our deposit. Then you will get it back again. 3. This must be accompanied with corresponding work. Peter tells us that it is vain for us to talk about committing the keeping of our soul to God unless we back up the committing with consistent, Christ-like lives. 4. This committing of our souls into God's hands does not mean that we are absolved from taking care of them ourselves. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THUS LIVING IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONTINUAL DEPENDENCE ON, AND REFERENCE TO, GOD, about great things and little things. Whenever a man is living by trust, even when the trust is mistaken, or when it is resting upon some mere human, fallible creature like himself, in the measure of his confidence is the measure of his tranquillity. III. THE GROUND UPON WHICH THIS GREAT VENTURE OF FAITH MAY BE MADE. "Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of Truth." (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Committing ourselves to God*:—"Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Hence—I. HE TESTIFIES, BY HIS COMMITTING HIMSELF TO GOD, TO THE POWER OF THE LORD'S REDEMPTION. He has felt it and acknowledges it. II. TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. God is the "Lord God of truth." To which class do we belong? (R. W. Evans, B.D.) *The dying Christian committing his soul to God*:—I. WITH WHOM DOES THE DYING CHRISTIAN WISH TO ENTRUST HIS SOUL? There are only two beings who can have charge of it when it quits the body—the Lord or Satan. Into the hands of one of these our souls must go when they die, and with one of these we must spend eternity. But men generally are quite indifferent on this matter. They feel no real concern. They have a vague hope

of heaven and fear of hell. But neither influences their conduct in any important degree. Christians, however, must desire that which David so desired—that the Lord God should receive his spirit. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMMITTING HIS SOUL INTO HIS HANDS IN A DYING HOUR. 1. A firm persuasion that the soul will outlive the body. Not by reason but by the Gospel only does he first learn really and habitually to regard himself as the heir of eternity. And this conviction deepens as he grows in grace. 2. A high value for the soul. The body is as nothing compared to it. The body is the casket, but the soul is the jewel, and that he would, indeed, have saved. 3. A lively sense of the serious and awful nature of death, a conviction of our need of help in a dying hour. The soul in such an hour will cling more closely to its God. No man will think lightly of death who has ever thought himself near death. 4. A belief that God is willing to receive the soul. III. THE WARRANT AND ENCOURAGEMENT THUS TO DO. 1. God is the Christian's Redeemer. 2. The faithfulness of God. He is the "God of truth," and He has promised to save them that trust in Him. IV. THE LESSON OF THIS SUBJECT. 1. The great value of Christian faith. 2. Here is a source of comfort under the loss of friends. 3. How confidently we may commit into the same hand all other things. 4. How important that now we should become the redeemed of the Lord. (C. Bradley.) *A watchword for life and death*.—I. THE TRUE WATCHWORD OF LIFE. 1. We approach the duties of life through a series of the most elevating considerations. (1) We are not our own. (2) We are parts of a great system. (3) We are servants, not masters. (4) The things that are round about us are beneath our serious notice, except for momentary convenience or instruction. 2. We accept the trials of life with the most hopeful patience. They are—(1) Disciplinary. (2) Under control. (3) Needful. 3. We recognize the mercies of life with the most joyful thankfulness. The name of God is upon the smallest of them. II. THE TRUE WATCHWORD OF DEATH. This watchword, as spoken by Jesus and Stephen, shows—1. Their belief in a state of being at present invisible. They must at least be credited with speaking their deepest personal convictions. It is something to us in our ignorance and weakness to know who have believed this doctrine of a future state. 2. Their assurance of the limitations of human malice. The spirit was free! 3. Application. (1) Where the spirit is fit for the presence of God, there is no fear of death. (2) All who have died in the faith are present with the Lord. (3) Jesus Himself knows what it is to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. (4) The prayer for entrance amongst the blest may come too late. We have no authority for the encouragement of death-bed repentance. (J. Parker, D.D.) *The saints' dying prayer*.—I. These words are full of the fact of our HUMAN IMMORTALITY. Man has and is a spirit, which he can commit. II. A MAN MUST DO SOMEWHAT WITH HIS SPIRIT. Some commit their spirit to the dream of theosophy; spiritualism; a worldly carelessness about its destiny; an external morality; external rites; purging punishments. III. TO WHOM IT IS MOST RIGHT AND REASONABLE TO COMMIT ONE'S SPIRIT. 1. To a personal God. 2. To a redeeming God. 3. To a God of truth. (W. Hoyt, D.D.) *The redeemed soul in God's hand*.—I. THE BELIEVER HAS BEEN REDEEMED BY GOD. This Divine redemption—1. Is a deliverance from the greatest of all evils, the service of Satan—ignorance, disease, remorse, death, hell. 2. Was effected at an infinite cost—the death of Him who is one with the Father. 3. Is an eternal redemption of the entire nature. II. THE BELIEVER IS ASSURED OF HIS REDEMPTION. 1. This assurance comes of faith. 2. Feeling thus assured of our redemption, God should constantly be the object of our love, and our lives be dedicated to His service. III. THE BELIEVER, FEELING ASSURED OF HIS REDEMPTION, TRUSTFULLY YIELDS HIS SPIRIT INTO THE HAND OF HIS MAKER, WHEN HE DEPARTS THIS LIFE. "Be ye also ready." "Prepare to meet your God." (Thos. Evans.) *Redemption a ground of encouragement to commit the soul to God*.—No question so important to us as this—how can we be just with God. Reason and philosophy cannot answer it, but the Bible does. I. TAKE A BRIEF VIEW OF GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION. It includes—1. The free and full pardon of sin. 2. Provision for our sanctification. 3. Adoption into God's family. II. All this furnishes ample ground for THE COMMITMENT OF OUR SOULS INTO THE HANDS OF GOD. What is it to do this? It implies—1. Conviction of guilt. 2. Persuasion of His readiness to receive and keep what is committed to Him. 3. Choosing to be ruled by Him. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT THERE IS IN REDEMPTION TO DO THIS. You are assured—1. That all obstacles are put out of the way. 2. That all you need is provided for you and freely offered to you



3. No conditions are required but that you simply commit your soul to God. 4. It is the only way of being saved. IV. CONCLUSION. 1. None may say, there is no hope for me. 2. The work of redemption illustrates the goodness of God. 3. Are we now trusting in Christ? if so, we have committed, etc. 4. How great our obligations to live to the Divine glory. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *The language of a dying saint*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HIS COMMITTING HIS SPIRIT TO GOD. 1. A deep conviction of the soul's immortality. 2. A preferable concern for his soul. 3. A firm persuasion that his spirit would be safe with God. The soul is as a precious jewel, hence a great trust. II. HIS ENCOURAGEMENT HEREIN. "Thou hast redeemed me," etc. For in this redemption the believer finds—1. Love, wonderful, matchless, divine (1 John iv. 10; 1 Pet. i. 18). Hence he is greatly encouraged. 2. Property (Ezek. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. vi. 19; Ezek. xvi. 8; Isa. xliii. 21). And then—3. Power. God "is able to keep that," etc. 4. Faithfulness. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. 2. Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace. 3. Rejoice in the prospect of the glorious resurrection day. (*Samuel Lavington.*) From the text learn—I. DYING IN A SAINT'S ACCOUNT IS A DIFFICULT WORK. 1. It is an untried work. 2. It is a final farewell to the present world. 3. It is to put off or lay down the body, no more to be re-assumed till the general resurrection at the end of the world. 4. Our probation is at an end. 5. To die is a great and difficult work, seeing thereupon the soul removes into a new state and world. To remove from one kingdom or country to another, is a great thing; but how much greater to remove into a new world! a world we have not seen, and are little acquainted with. 6. We have to meet God as our Judge, who will order our soul to its unchangeable state and place in the eternal world. For all these reasons to die is always difficult. And it is more so if death find us in the dark as to our title to the life to come. Conscience may be filled with terror under the sense of sin, and dread of deserved wrath. Sin, unpardoned sin, is the sting of death, as drawing after it an everlasting hell; and the very suspicion of this is enough to make the heart to tremble. God in our last moments may hide Himself, or withdraw the light of His countenance; and what distress follows upon this, none can tell but those that have felt it. It is no wonder that such circumstances make dying work peculiarly hard. II. THE CHILDREN OF GOD CONSIDERING THEMSELVES AS DYING, ARE CHIEFLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR IMMORTAL SOULS. The psalmist here was so; he had prayed for temporal salvation in the words of this psalm before my text, but did not insist mainly upon it. However it was as to his body, his great care was with reference to his soul; O Lord, into Thy hand I commit my spirit: let that be safe, and I shall be satisfied. (*Anon.*)

Ver. 6. **I have hated them that regard lying vanities, but I trust in the Lord.**—*Trust the antidote of superstitious vanities*:—Many think that superstition is but an exaggerated faith; that it will diminish with the growth of intelligence, and that it is necessary in appealing to ignorant and vulgar people. But some who have been alive to its mischiefs and horrors have been willing to risk the loss of faith in order to get rid of it; but when the reaction has come, and we have felt that the world could not go on safely without some faith, we have been ready to tolerate a considerable amount of superstition, lest faith, its companion, should perish with it. But the psalmist looks at it from quite a different point of view. He opposes "superstitious vanities" to "trust in the Lord." One is the protest against, the deliverance from, the other. This is the very spirit of the Old Testament. Trust in God—invisible and righteous, is the principle which every lawgiver, prophet, priest, is to exhibit in his actions, to enforce upon his land. So far as his trust fails, he fails to do the work he is called to do. Losing trust, they are told that they will infallibly bow down to objects of Nature, to idols of wood and stone; they will listen to wizards who peep and mutter; they will fear where no fear is; they will make their cruel imaginations into gods and worship them. Such was the message of Elijah. The people to whom he was sent were busy with religious acts and exercises. But he goes to turn them from these acts that they may trust in the Lord. So Hezekiah. The general of Sennacherib accused him of taking away altars: what hope, therefore, could he have of deliverance? But those very acts proved that Hezekiah trusted in the Lord more than all the kings that were before him. And so it is in the New Testament. The apostles found men everywhere bowing down to visible gods, trembling at the future, seeking for diviners who could penetrate its secrets.

Wherever they went, they found men fearing gods, trying to conciliate their favour or avert their wrath. To interfere with them was not in their power: state force, and mob opinion, were leagued in support of them. All they could do was to proclaim a Being whom men might trust. They did proclaim such a Being, they did incite men to trust in Him. And by so doing they struck such a blow at superstitious vanities as no iconoclast ever struck. They testified a hatred of them which they could not have testified, if they had had power to lay low every heathen altar, to cast every idol into the fire. They earned the hatred of those who held to these superstitious vanities. Not a martyr fell under the axe, or was tied to the stake, or was fastened to a cross, but because he would not do sacrifice to the likeness of some emperor, or some god whom the emperor sanctioned with his divine fiat. Not one had courage to make that denial, but because he trusted in the Lord, who had given His Son to be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. And so Trust, because the object of it was more fully revealed, was a mightier destroyer of superstition than it had ever been. And our own experience confirms all this. Each one has some superstitious vanity or other to which he is prone: some dark shadow which haunts him; some visible or invisible terror, which is always ready to make a coward of him. And we cannot rid ourselves of it by reason or arguments of science. These often fail when they are wanted most. There is no help but in trust in God. It alone answers our dark fears. God has spoken to us sinners, and bid us confide in Him. And as we trust, so we conquer our sin; as we fail to trust, so are we overcome. What greater proof could there be that Superstition and Faith are not of the same kin, but are deadly and everlasting foes? And the history of Christendom leads to the same conclusion. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*)

Ver. 7. **I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy, for Thou hast considered my trouble.**—*Divine chastisements*.—I. THAT THE SOULS OF ALL GOD'S PEOPLE MUST HAVE THEIR DAY OF ADVERSITY. This, indeed, follows from the universal methods by which God governs and upholds the world. The present life is not a state of retribution, or a place where God professes to discriminate visibly between the good and the evil. If God make His sun to shine both on the just and the unjust, what shall forbid His judgments from alighting also on both? II. **WHATEVER OUR TROUBLES MAY BE THERE IS ONE TO CONSIDER OUR CALAMITIES AND TO KNOW HOW LONG WE CAN BEAR THEM.** "Thou hast considered and known my soul in adversities." Affliction often appears to move both God and man; it moves God to consider man's infirmities, and it moves man to consider his own soul. Behold, then, why we "count them happy which endure"—because endurance has a tendency to bring God and the sinner together. Prosperity, health, and comfort too often form a great gulf betwixt us and God—a gulf which must either be crossed by a bridge of sighs, or else filled up with the fragments of those earthly idols which our hearts had worshipped instead of God. And when the poor sinner is thus brought unto God, the first petition he prefers is, "Lord, consider my affliction; look upon my distress; let Thine eye fasten itself upon my misery and pain." For his faith tells him all will be well, if God can be brought to take notice of his low estate. Our faith in the Divine promises warms and brightens by the very earnestness with which we plead them; we move God to pity, by moving ourselves to feel that we need pity, and are enabled to draw nigh to God, by the very act of asking God to "draw nigh to us." III. **THAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S CONSIDERATION OF THE TROUBLES OF HIS PEOPLE SHOULD SUPPLY US WITH MATTER FOR JOY AND PRAISE.** "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy." We are all more forward to ask for blessings than we are to render God thanks when we have received them. Ten lepers would ask the Saviour for health, but one alone returned to thank Him for it. A day could be taken from our labours to humble ourselves under a scourge, but a day could not be afforded to return thanks for our deliverance. Brethren, this backwardness in thanksgiving ought not so to be. We are hastening to a world where praise is all we shall have to do, and it surely were but fitting that we should begin our rehearsal now. Here we can forbear, and hope, and believe, and pray; but what room will there be for such like works in heaven? (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*)

Ver. 8. **Thou hast set my feet in a large room.**—*The "large room"*.—I. THE CHRISTIAN CREED PLACES US IN A VERY EXTENDED REALM. Suppose the case of one puzzled by the mysteries of existence, learning the creed of the Christian Church.

Such a man contrasts the narrow material ideas that had become familiar to his thoughts, the insoluble riddle that the great universe presented to his mind as he tried to reduce all its wonder and glory to modifications of blind matter; he contrasts all this with the rest he feels as he repeats to himself the articles of Christian belief. And as he thinks of the old unsatisfying guesses and the present blessed and well-attested creed, he has to join in the inspired song—"Thou hast set my feet in a large room." II. Contrast the sphere of interest of one who lives for mere natural objects, with THE WIDENED HORIZON OF ONE WHO HAS RECEIVED "THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION, WHEREBY WE CRY, ABBA, FATHER!" Gradually or suddenly you are made ashamed of your self-seeking life. The Spirit's holy strivings with your spirit are felt, and prevail; you are drawn as a penitent to the Cross of Christ. The knowledge of His pardon gladdens your heart. Longings for goodness, for purity, for holiness, for usefulness, swell within you. Then what a grand extension takes place in your mental horizon. How dull, petty, and narrow that world-centred life now seems! What a number of new interests, new objects for endeavour, hope and aspiration, rise before you! Little pleasures and innocent amusements and pleasant laughter are still enjoyed—enjoyed with a much fresher kind of enjoyment than before. But they have taken their place now as little things. Life has become to you a much broader, more varied, more intensely interesting drama than it used to be; for you are taken out of self. You are longing to please the Divine Friend. You are a member of a great community, a great company of dear brethren and sisters. Every one with whom you have intercourse is one for whom Christ died, and whom you want to help upwards. III. TAKE ONE MORE MENTAL STEP, AND ANTICIPATE THE TIME WHEN THERE WILL BE A STILL FURTHER ENLARGEMENT. During its larva life the caterpillar seems to have all its powers busied in creeping from leaf to leaf, and gathering in its monotonous nourishment. But there are growing within it all the while organs foreign to its present environment—strange powers, prophecies of an entirely different sphere of existence for which they prepare. In due time the environment changes. The chrysalis shell is broken; the great coloured wings shake themselves free. The "imago," the ideal being, rises up into the air, glittering and palpitating, a beautiful butterfly, gleaming in the sunshine, and winging its way from flower to flower. This is an old illustration of a fact ere long to be new in the experience of each of us. Here, as we try to do our duty, to bear our cross, to run our race, "looking unto Jesus," spiritual powers are developing within us; heavenly capacities are gradually growing. In God's good time the bodily organization will be broken up. A new departure in life will be taken. Then, when we come to be with Christ, when we join in the great company whom no man can number, when we serve in the holy temple of which God Himself and the Lamb are the Light, when we follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, then in the freedom of that heavenly life, in the wide domains opened for our energies by that heavenly service, we shall know the full meaning of the song of thanksgiving, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room." (*Canon Wynne.*) *The ample scope for human activities:*—They are not shut up within narrow limits, or indeed within any boundary line; their sphere is immeasurable. I. Their sphere affords ample play for their INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES. 1. Look at Nature. There is an ever-growing universe to study. There are volumes of truth in the smallest plant and the tiniest animalcule. 2. Look at the Bible. The Bible indeed is a "large room," its area of eternal principles transcends the limits of creation, and widens into the immensities. II. Their sphere affords ample play for their SOCIAL SYMPATHIES. The human heart was made, like the sun, to encompass the world with its genial and beneficent influences. III. Their sphere affords ample play for their VARIED ACTIVITIES. Activity is essential to our well-being; inaction is death. In the "large room" in which Providence has placed us all, there is work enough to engage all our activities in such a way as to yield us perfect satisfaction. 1. This "room" contains work adapted to draw out all our faculties. Our happiness,—nay, our very existence,—would be incomplete were one of our faculties undeveloped. (1) In this "room" there is work for our intellectual natures. There is a universe to study. (2) In this "room" there is work for our social natures. We are all members of a social system numbering thousands,—some to draw out our compassions, some to excite our esteem, some to inspire our admiration, some to fill us with delight and joy. (3) In this "room" there is work for our religious natures. We are made to worship; and in this "room" there is unfolded, in ten thousand aspects

of loveliness, an infinitely perfect God to worship. 2. This "room" contains work in which there is a perpetual freshness. We are so formed that monotony is not only distasteful to us, but distressing and saddening. But in this "room" there is fresh work for every fresh day. 3. This "room" contains work to which there is a perpetual promise. Man is an anticipating being. Work that does not terminate at death, because its grand purpose, the glory of God, runs into eternity. (*Homiliat.*)

Vers. 9-18. **Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.**—*The complaints of a sufferer, and the entreaties of a suppliant.*—I. THE COMPLAINTS OF A SUFFERER. 1. His sufferings were mental and severe. 2. His sufferings told most injuriously on his health. 3. His sufferings arose from a consciousness of his own guilt, and from the conduct of others. 4. Notwithstanding the severity of his sufferings, they utterly failed to destroy his confidence in God. II. THE ENTREATIES OF A SUPPLIANT. 1. Deliverance from enemies. 2. Divine approval. 3. Freedom from disappointment. 4. The ruin of his foes. This we are bound to condemn. 5. The subjugation of falsehood. (*Homiliat.*) *The exhausting ministry of sin.*—There is nothing drains away the strength like sin. At the time when sin is committed we may be unconscious of its demands; indeed, we may sometimes feel as though our strength had been increased. It is part of the subtlety of the Evil One that he often adds a little exuberance to our rebellion, and fills our life with a sense of freedom and delight. But the drain is not the less real because it is concealed. I have seen a village slaughter-house covered with ivy and climbing roses. And the destruction wrought by sin proceeds behind our apparent gains. The real exhaustion is frequently discovered in the time of storm. We are flung into some exacting circle of circumstances, and we find we do not possess the necessary resource. Now all sin is attended by this destructive ministry. It is not only the sensual excess, but the sin of the daintier kind. It is not only the presumptuous uncleanness, emerging from the life like some foul eruption, but it is the secret fault nibbling away in the inward parts. And it is not only that all sin is destructive, but all sin works with a ministry of general destruction. It is not only that a single power is impaired; the taint infects the entire life. Sin is an evil contagion, and its evil is not confined to a power; it pervades a personality. In the destructive influence of sin the most delicate powers are the first impaired. The whole being immediately suffers deterioration, created by the presence of an enervating atmosphere, but the finest powers are those which soonest reveal the insidious consumption. The coronal powers first begin to sicken, and the sickness creeps down into the basement. When a man sins, the blight first strikes the spiritual apprehension. There is no clearer indication of this than when we turn to prayer after we have committed sin. We feel as though we had no delicate hand by which to apprehend the things divine; we have been coarsened, and these delicate presences are not revealed to our touch. But it is not only that our powers are benumbed, they are also emasculated; their secret strength is drained away. But with the impoverishment of the feeling for God there goes the dulling of the moral sense. We lose our powers of refinement, our capacity for discerning between the holy and the profane. We have no acute apprehension of moral values. The very criterion of social health is found in the accuracy of this moral standard, and it is the most pathetic commonplace to watch its deterioration. When a man tells a lie his moral sense is stunned as though he had received a blow in the forehead. And with the consumption of these highest powers our emotional endowment is impaired. I do not mean that we lose our readiness to tears. Weeping may be an art or an artifice, and there are many people whose emotions have been subsidized by the devil. But a fine emotional susceptibility gives weight and pressure to sacred purpose. We can do little or nothing without it. Logical convictions may abound, but they may be inactive and inert. They may be like tramscars waiting for electrical power. We can do little without emotion in political life, and perhaps the greatest need of our time is a baptism of profound and genuine emotion. But the strength of affection is drained away by sin, and what is left is polluted. A common sin diminishes the strength of the affections; they are no longer so refined and sympathetic; affection, through the ministry of sin, can become blind and deaf and dumb. "My strength faileth because of mine iniquity." Now if this destructive ministry is at work, what can we do with it? Antagonistic ministries are suggested in the way of powerful antidotes.

We are recommended to rearrange and refurnish men's environments. But what sort of an environment shall we create? Do we not too frequently argue as if the iniquity were all found in the Seven Dials and not in Bolgravia? And yet in one the environment appears to be propitious, while in the other it seems to be adverse. Men say, "Let us make our towns more like Bournville, and as far as we can, let us restore the original Paradise." But the devil is in Bournville as the serpent was in Eden. Other men accentuate the ministry of education. Yes, and who would say otherwise? And yet many an educated man is a beast. A secret canker is the companion of many a well-stored mind. We can hear the educated men and women everywhere employing the words of the psalmist: "My strength faileth because of mine iniquity." How does the man of the text face his need? He surrenders his unmade soul to its Maker. "Unto Thee, O God, I commit my spirit." He commits his spirit to God as an invalid commits himself to a competent physician. And this with completeness of trust. "I trusted in Thee, O Lord. I said, Thou art my God!" I think there is a most tender pathos in these words. "Thou . . . My!" This sin-haunted, sin-persecuted man lifts his eyes to the Maker, and addresses himself to a personal God. He quietly but confidently claims that Maker for himself. "Thou art my God." And then with a sense of his own complete helplessness, and of the utter confusion which his own handiwork has wrought, he places the corrupted life into other and better hands. "Take it off my hands, good Lord! I have spoiled Thy work, and the beauty and the strength of it are gone! I bring it back to Thee! Into Thy hands I commit my spirit!" But with this completeness of trust there goes an audacity of obedience. There is no real trust without it. There is no faith without faithfulness, and no trust without obedience. The man puts his life into the hands of the Maker, and then stands to do the Maker's bidding. And what are the issues of the faithful committal? We find them described in ver. 19. "O, how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" The immediate issue is a state of convalescence, the gradual recovery of lost health. (J. H. Jowett, M.A.)

Ver. 10. **My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.**—(Nehemiah viii. 10). *Moral weakness and strength*:—These two passages tell of the source of both. The psalmist tells us that his iniquity was the cause of his strength failing. Nehemiah, that an excess even of penitential feeling will be injurious. One would have thought that there would have been no danger of such a feeling being in excess, yet, though their sorrow was the holy and healing sorrow of penitence, the prophet urges them to check it, and instead of looking at their transgressions, to look rather to the merciful and bountiful grace of God. It is morbid and conceited to magnify our sin against God's mercy; to brood over it and refuse to be comforted; while it is a generous and pious thing to magnify God's mercy against our sin; to say, "Although my sin be great, yet God's forgiving grace is greater still." We are all prone to think and say we have not repented enough. But we forget that sorrow for sin is not the end but only a means, leading us to forsake sin. As soon, therefore, as our sorrow produces this effect, it has accomplished its end, and should no longer be dwelt upon. There is manifestly a point beyond which sorrow, even for sin, is neither a practical nor a beneficial thing. That cannot be a godly sorrow which rises up as a thick black cloud before God's pardoning mercy. That only is a godly sorrow which leads us to God. If a man so cherish sorrow for sin as to engender in his heart the feeling that his sin cannot be forgiven, then his very sorrow for sin itself becomes a sinful thing; for it misrepresents and mistrusts God. It might be a heathen man's sorrow, who had never heard of Christ's salvation, but it should never be the sorrow of the Christian hearer, before whom that salvation is set every day. And then, in a parenthesis, and with a glimpse of profound spiritual philosophy, the prophet adds as a reason for this urgency—"For the joy of the Lord is your strength." There is no strength save in a joyous heart. Sorrow may lead to strength, just as dislocation may lead to order. A wrong state of things may have painfully to be set right. Old things may have to be swept away, before new and better things can come; but dislocation itself is not strength, but weakness. So sorrow for sin is in itself weakness; it is the heart emptying itself, and bemoaning itself, it is a looseness of the joints, a melting of the marrow. It is not a building up, but a pulling down. Only a joyous, confident, satisfied heart can be a strong one—a heart

assured of itself, and assured of God's favour and helping. This is the essential means and condition of spiritual strength. God gives us strength, but not by doing things for us which we can do for ourselves. He helps us as a physician helps a patient—not by proffering us an arm to lean upon, but by infusing new life and strength into our souls—by making His strength perfect in our weakness. Iniquity makes a man's strength fail, he is strong just in proportion as he is holy. The strenuous urgencies of Scripture that we should rejoice in the Lord always; the solicitous provision for our rejoicing that God has made; nay, the very character of Christian salvation and privilege make it imperative upon every one of us to cultivate to the utmost that joy of the Lord which is our strength. Only sin and unspiritualness hinder joy, and so disparage religion, and keep the young and joyous from embracing it. The redemption of the world lingers, and the millennium is kept back because the church is too austere. Its energies are weak, because it has not a rejoicing impulse. Did we walk closely with God, and realize the blessedness of communion with Him, our joy would be full. (R. Allen.)

**Ver. 12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.—Buried alive:—**This title would suggest to many, terrible ideas of an awful physical calamity, such as has taken place in mines, or in actual burials ere life was extinct. But there are other senses in which men are buried alive. I. IN AN UNFORTUNATE SENSE. 1. For want of opportunities of mental development. The human mind is like seed in the vegetable kingdom. It contains life and unbounded possibilities of increase, but unless it finds suitable soil, shower and warmth, the vital principle is buried alive, buried in the shell. And so it is too often with thousands of men. There are multitudes possessing brilliant natural capacities—mute Miltons and Shakespeares—but buried for lack of opportunity. Hence, let us rejoice at the growing determination that our children shall be educated, however poor they may be, and thus shall possess the means of stimulating life and growth. 2. Through the infirmities of age. Their day is past. They once were prominent and well known, but now are "forgotten as dead men out of mind." 3. Through the envy of their contemporaries. This, perhaps, is the meaning of the psalmist's words. Malice bespreads a thick cloud over a name which once has shone brightly. Now many are thus kept in the background. II. IN A CRIMINAL SENSE. "To be carnally minded is death." III. IN A VIRTUOUS SENSE. "We are buried with Him by baptism into death." Not the baptism of water, of course, but the baptism of that holy fire that burns up all carnalities. What is buried here? Not the mind, but the old man with its lusts. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ," etc. This is a virtuous burying alive. It means being dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto righteousness. IV. CONCLUSION. In which of these senses are you buried alive? Some of you may say that it is in the first sense. It may be so; ask God to guide you into a fit sphere. Or it may be by the infirmities of age. You cannot do what you once did and what you wish to do. But God accepts the will for the deed. He values service by its motive. But some of you are buried alive in the criminal sense. You are dead in the grave of depravity. "Arise from the dead and Christ," etc. And others of you are so in the virtuous sense—dead to sin. You can say, God forbid that I should glory save . . . the world is crucified to me and I to the world. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

**Ver. 19. Fear was on every side.—The length and the breadth are equal** (with Ps. lxxi. 21):—Life is circumvented by peril; yet on every side we are promised assurance and safety. I. THE HINDER SIDE. 1. The world of the past clings to us, and in many ways alarms and embarrasses. We cannot rub out the blood-stains. We can plead no "Statute of Limitations." 2. But our God comforts us on this side, with pardoning and renewing grace. II. THE FARTHER SIDE. 1. How much of a deeply distressing order may happen to us in this new year. Changes, trials, disappointments, bereavements. We feel that we are like Nansen in the Arctic region—the ice is all around us holding us firmly in its threatening grip. We go up to the crow's-nest and survey the scene, but there is no open sea, no inviting shore, only one iceberg jamming another until the last is lost in the dark horizon. We need not wonder that men look into the strange, uncertain, threatening future with deep seriousness. 2. Yet is there comfort on this side also. God goes before us, preparing us for the future, preparing the future for us. The trees on this winter's day are being secretly prepared for the summer days of sunshine, so are the bulbs in the soil, so are the flies and butterflies, and the

summer is on its way getting up its fires and showers; the two will meet at the right moment exactly ready for each other; in six months' time again all these things will secretly undergo another great change, and although there is not a morsel of ice or flake of snow to be seen, they will be preparing for the winter. God is secretly equipping us for the trial that is to try us; He is quietly getting us ready for old age; He is establishing harmony between us and the circumstances He must introduce; He is already making it easy for us to die. Let us be of good heart. Many bright things and scenes are ahead for most of us; if our goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew God's goodness is not. And as to the evil things, God's government shall soften them one by one and lead us out of them. III. **THE OUTSIDE.** 1. Like the apostle (2 Cor. vii. 5), we all have our Macedonia, and sustain desperate fightings. It is vain to speak as some do of the smoothness and pleasantness of modern life as compared with life in the ancient days. The well-dressed congregation of to-day is fighting a battle as difficult and bitter as those noble saints fought in sheep-skins and goat-skins. We, too, bear in our bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. 2. Yet here also we are comforted. "Our flesh had no rest," says the apostle, but their spirit had. God shelters and strengthens us amid dilemmas and tribulations, making them to work out our salvation and glory. IV. **THE INSIDE.** The apostle continues in the passage just quoted: "Within were fears." We have, perhaps, most to fear here. The garrison itself is unsatisfactory, weak. We know the force within to be ten thousand, the investing army to be thousands of thousands. It is a sceptical garrison. It has little faith in itself—little faith in victory—it is fainthearted to begin with. It is a treacherous garrison—so much that is within us perfidiously allies itself with the alien army. But here also we are comforted. He Himself enters into our life; He makes us heroic and conquering by virtue of His presence manifested in our heart. The peace of God keeps our heart—"garrisons" our heart. Here is the victory of Mansoul—the great white flag of the Prince waves over it, and, weak as we are in ourselves, we are invincible in the power of purity and faith. This is the "garrison" on which we rely, and which shall keep us in the hour and power of darkness. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

**Ver. 15. My times are in Thy hand.**—*Affiance*:—There is nothing which more distinguishes the Christian from the ungodly man than the temper with which the experiences and possibilities of life are regarded. The Christian sees in all the hand of God, and submits; the other feels the stroke hardly knowing whence it comes. The one looks up with intelligent hope, the other looks down as it falls with a blind despair. How terrible are the calamities which the psalm portrays; but how beautiful the trust which, in the midst of them all, the psalmist displays. I. **WHAT LIES AT ITS BASIS**—belief in the truth of a particular providence. Now, providence is the Divine reason of all things. Deny it, and you take away the ground of my trust and resignation. And why should any suppose that the control or agency of the Infinite should terminate with the first creating act? That He should create and then leave that which He has created to go on its way without further control or care? Yet many think this. They believe that God has formed a number of self-acting machines. He wound up the mighty horologe, and stood aside to see it go. They think it derogatory to His dignity to be constantly interfering with His works. But where is there less dignity in administering laws than in appointing them? And how do we know what is or is not worthy of His care? Apart from the plans and purposes of God, the entire universe is insignificant: in relation to them every atom is important, for upon any one atom the entire sequence may depend. It is told of Mahomet, how, when hard pressed by his pursuers, he took refuge in a cave, which they were about to enter, when they observed a spider's web spun over the mouth of it, and, therefore, turned away convinced that it could not have been lately entered. That spider's web changed the destiny of the world, inasmuch as it preserved the life of the man who exercised such immense influence over it. And how perpetually we are finding that vast results turn upon the most trivial and insignificant circumstances. Without providence, history would be an absurdity, the universe an enigma, and the Deity undeified. The Christian assigns to this doctrine a place among the primary truths of his religious faith. He devoutly and joyfully recognizes it. In the text the psalmist declares that his "times"—all the vicissitudes and changes of his life—are in God's hand; all under God's appointment, and under His control. It is so. Our times of prosperity, of adversity, and the time of our

death. II. THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S RECOGNITION OF THIS TRUTH. It is by faith. The proof of the doctrine is sufficient but not overpowering. Our admission of it depends largely upon our moral condition as, indeed, all faith does. There is no faith in believing the demonstration of a mathematical problem. A man, therefore, may recognize no providence, and to those who do, its difficulties are often very great. Nevertheless, the Christian believes. For he believes in the justice, the wisdom and the goodness, as well as the power of God. And because he is reconciled to God in Christ he believes that providence will bring good to him. He calls upon God as "Our Father, which art in Heaven." Well, then, let us be content, be our lot what it may. Trust for all the future. Let me never dare to doubt. (*Henry Allon.*) "*My times are in Thy hand*":—Whatever is to come out of our life, is in our heavenly Father's hand. He guards the vine of life, and He also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life be as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman, and the harvest of that field is with Him also. The ultimate results of His work of grace upon us, and of His education of us in this life, are in the highest hand. The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates; but by the hand of love. We shall not die before our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long. Not only are we ourselves in the hand of the Lord, but all that surrounds us. We are comforted to have it so. I. A CLEAR CONVICTION THAT OUR TIMES ARE IN THE HAND OF GOD WILL CREATE WITHIN US A SENSE OF THE NEARNESS OF GOD. If the hand of God is laid upon all our surroundings, God Himself is near us. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. 1. "*My times are in Thy hand.*" Then there is nothing left to chance. Events happen not to men by a fortune which has no order or purpose in it. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." We dare not leave out the least event. The creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence as the march of a pestilence through a nation. 2. "*My times are in Thy hand*" is an assurance which also puts an end to the grim idea of an iron fate compelling all things. Have you the notion that fate grinds on like an enormous wheel, ruthlessly crushing everything that lies in its way, not pausing for pity, nor turning aside for mercy? Remember that, if you liken Providence to a wheel, it must be a wheel which is full of eyes. Its every revolution is in wisdom and goodness. 3. "*My times are in Thy hand*" reveals the condescension of the Lord. Wonder of wonders, that God should not only think of me, but should make my concerns His concerns, and take my matters into His hand! 4. What a bliss this is! How near it brings God to us, and us to God. II. THIS TRUTH IS A COMPLETE ANSWER TO MANY A TEMPTATION. Satan says, "Now you have a large family, and your chief duty is to provide for them. Your position brings with it many wants. Here is a plan of making money; others follow it. It may not be quite straight, but you must not be particular in such a world as this, for nobody else is." How will you meet this? Say to Satan, "It is not my business to provide for myself or for my family: my times are in God's hand; and his name is Jehovah-Jireh, 'the Lord will provide'; and I will not do a questionable thing, though it would fill my house with silver and gold. I shall not meddle with my Lord's business. It is His to provide for me: it is mine to walk uprightly, and obey His Word." But supposing he says, "Well, but you are already in difficulties, and you cannot extricate yourself if you are too precise. A poor man cannot afford to keep a conscience: it is an expensive luxury in these days. Give your conscience a holiday, and you can soon get out of your trouble." Let your reply be, "O prince of darkness, it is no business of mine to extricate myself! My times are in God's hand. I have taken my case to Him, and He will work for me in this matter better than I can do for myself! He does not wish me to do a wrong thing, that I may do for myself what He has promised to do for me." III. THIS CONVICTION IS A SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AGAINST THE FEAR OF MEN. How often we meet with people who are staggered by slander. If my times are in God's hand, no man can do me harm unless God permit. Though my soul is among lions, yet no lion can bite me while Jehovah's angel is my guard. IV. A full belief in the statement of our text is A CURE FOR PRESENT WORRY. O Lord, if my times are in Thy hand, I have cast my care on Thee, and I trust and am not afraid! To leave our times with God is to live as free from care as the birds upon the bough. If we fret, we shall not glorify God; and we shall not constrain others to see what true religion can do for us in the hour of tribulation. Fret and worry put it out of our power to act



wisely; but if we can leave everything with God because everything is really in His hand, we shall be peaceful, and our action will be deliberate; and for that very reason it will be more likely to be wise. He that rolls his burden upon the Lord will be strong to do or to suffer; and his days shall be as the days of heaven upon the earth. V. A FIRM CONVICTION AS TO THIS TRUTH IS A QUIETUS AS TO FUTURE DREAD. The very word "times" supposes change for you; but as there are no changes with God, all is well. Things will happen which you cannot foresee; but your Lord has foreseen all, and provided for all. VI. A FULL CONVICTION THAT OUR TIMES ARE IN HIS HAND WILL BE A REASON FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE. If God has undertaken my business for me, then I may most fitly undertake such business for Him as He may appoint. Queen Elizabeth wished one of the leading merchants of London to go to Holland to watch her interests there. The honest man told her Majesty that he would obey her commands; but he begged her to remember that it would involve the ruin of his own trade for him to be absent. To this the Queen replied, "If you will see to my business, I will see to your business." With such a royal promise he might willingly let his own business go; for a queen should have it in her power to do more for a subject than he can do for himself. The Lord, in effect, says to the believer, "I will take your affairs in hand, and see them through for you." Will you not at once feel that now it is your joy, your delight, to live to glorify your gracious Lord? VII. IF OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD'S HAND, HERE IS A GRAND ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. He that takes care of our times, will take care of our eternity. He that has brought us so far, and wrought so graciously for us, will see us safely over the rest of the road. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *On our lives being in the hand of God*:—The sun that rolls over our heads, the food that we receive, the rest that we enjoy, daily admonish us of a superior power, on whom the inhabitants of the earth depend for light, life, and subsistence. But as long as all things proceed in their ordinary course; when day returns after day with perfect similarity; when our life seems stationary, and nothing occurs to warn us of any approaching change, the religious sentiments of dependence are apt to be forgotten. I. THAT OUR TIMES ARE NOT IN OUR OWN HAND. 1. Of this we may behold many a proof, when we look back on the transactions of the year which is finished. Recollection will readily present to us a busy period, filled up with a mixture of business and amusement, of anxieties and cares, of joys and sorrows. We have formed many a plan; in public or in private life, we have been engaged in a variety of pursuits. Let me now ask, how small a proportion of all that has happened could have been foreseen, or foretold by us? How many things have occurred, of which we had no expectation; some, perhaps, that have succeeded beyond our hopes; many, also, that have befallen us contrary to our wish? 2. That scene is now closed. We look forward to another year; and what do we behold there? all is a blank to our view. Life and death, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, joy and trouble, lie in one undistinguishable mass, where our eye can descry nothing through the obscurity that wraps them up. II. THAT OUR TIMES ARE IN THE HAND OF GOD. 1. As a supreme, irresistible Ruler. He has foreknown and arranged everything. He sees from the beginning to the end; and brings forward everything that happens in its due time and place. 2. As a merciful Guardian and Father. To Him we may safely commit ourselves, and all our concerns, as to One who is best qualified, both to direct the incidents proper to happen to us in this world, and to judge of the time when it is fit for us to be removed from it. Even that ignorance of our future destiny in life, of which we sometimes complain, is a signal proof of His goodness. He hides from us the view of futurity, because the view would be dangerous and overpowering. It would either dispirit us with visions of terror, or intoxicate us by the disclosure of success. Conclusion. 1. Seeing our times are not in our own hand, seeing futurity is unknown to us, let us check the vain curiosity of penetrating into what is to come. Our wisdom is, to be prepared for whatever the year is to bring; prepared to receive comforts with thankfulness, troubles with fortitude; and to improve both for the great purposes of virtue and eternal life. 2. Another important instruction which naturally arises from our times not being in our own hands is, that we ought no longer to trifle with what it is not in our power to prolong: but that we should make haste to live as wise men; not delaying till to-morrow what may be done to-day; doing now with all our might whatever our hand findeth to do, before that night cometh wherein no man can work. 3. When we consider that our times are in the hand of God as a sovereign Disposer, it is an obvious inference from this

truth, that we should prepare ourselves to submit patiently to His pleasure, both as to the events which are to fill up our days, and as to the time of our continuing in this world. 4. To God as a wise Ruler, calm submission is due; but it is more than submission that belongs to Him as a merciful Father; it is the spirit of cordial and affectionate consent to His will. Unknown to us as the times to come are, it should be sufficient to our full repose that they are known to God. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) *Safe times*:—I. THE FACT EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT. 1. In a general sense, every man's "times" are in God's "hand." It is a happy thing, and it certifies the stability of the wide realm of being, that the great Ruler will not suffer one thread of His government to pass for a moment out of His grasp. 2. In a special sense, which renders it worthy of grateful mention, the good man's "times" are in God's "hand." You are helpless: will that slacken God's care that all shall be best with you? You are dependent, and you try to be trustful: will that set to sleep the vigilance of Him who has all the ordering of your way? You are ignorant and erring: will that give occasion to infinite pity to mislead you or neglect you, and you right upon your march towards the opportunity of scanning all His dealings with you, and of scanning them in the light of a knowledge which it is His purpose shall eternally increase? Nay: your "times," every one of every shade and shape, are at home in the centre of all safety. II. THE TEMPER IN WHICH THIS FACT IS EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT. 1. The psalmist gives to the fact his cordial personal consent. It is not a statement merely; it is a self-gratulation also, with something of a thanksgiving besides. 2. When the responsibility would be the heaviest if he did have his "times" in his own hand, he remembers they are in God's, and breathes freely because the weight of them is not at all upon himself, but altogether upon Him who bears the burdens of eternity and doth not weary. Our part is patience, obedience, brave submission. 3. It allays all his anxiety about his "times." Fears about ourselves, fears about friends whom we love better than ourselves, apprehensions about life, apprehensions about death—about death perhaps most of all, with its when and where and how,—every one of them would be gone from these hearts of ours, if only they held within them the plain fact of our text as firmly as they hold many a fact that has a thousand times less of deep personal interest for us. (*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*) *Our times, living and dying, in God's hand*:—I. OUR TIMES ARE NOT NATURALLY OUR OWN, to employ as we please, to be accountable to ourselves only for the use of them. 1. Certainly not the times which are gone by; for we cannot recall them: they are not in our power. As little control can we exercise over the hours that are present: we cannot command sickness or health, youth or age. The times will never come when we shall begin to be at our own disposal, and cease to depend on God's sovereign will. It is not possible, neither is it desirable. Rejoice that your times are in God's hand. 2. It is not less so in regard to His dispensations towards us, as we are His redeemed people, children of grace. In this respect, especially, "none of us liveth to himself," etc. II. THIS ARRANGEMENT IS FOR OUR ADVANTAGE. 1. The happiness of feeling assured, when we come to die, that our time of dying is in the Lord's hand, must be inconceivably great. 2. The way to have this happiness when we die is to make it our aim while we live, to seek God's mercy in Christ, to submit to His disposal, and to follow His steps, led by His hand, in a holy, serious, humble, uncorrupt way; and, as all our times are in the Lord's hand, to bless the Lord at all times. (*W. Firth, B.D.*) *Our times are in God's hand*:—"My times are in Thy hand"—the seasons, the stages, and eras of my life, with all their casualties, and opportunities, incidents, and events, are all in Thy hand, under Thy control, and at Thy disposal. I. MY PROSPEROUS TIMES ARE IN THY HAND. 1. My times of worldly prosperity. This is as clear as it is certain. For though every one may do much to preserve his health, that does not depend entirely on himself, any more than that of his family and friends; his good name is not in his own keeping; his credit is not in his own power; business does not come at his bidding. 2. Times of spiritual prosperity. Without this, the prosperous man is like a vessel in full sail before the wind without ballast, in danger of being dashed to pieces. II. MY TRYING TIMES ARE IN THY HAND. 1. Times trying to my principles. Times of change of situation, condition, and calling in life; of removal from one place of residence to another; of losses, disappointments, and failures in business; of fraud, injustice, and oppression from men; of adversity, poverty and privations;—are especially trying to men's principles. 2. Times trying to my patience.

Times of personal and relative affliction and distress. III. MY WORKING TIMES ARE IN THY HAND. 1. Times when I am able to work. Every one should have a lawful calling in the world, should abide in his calling, mind the business of his calling, should "study to be quiet, and do his own business, and work with his own hands," as he is commanded. 2. Times when I am specially called to work. Times of abounding iniquity, etc. IV. MY WAITING TIMES ARE IN THY HAND. 1. Times of waiting on the Lord. In the sanctuary, the family, the closet. 2. Times of waiting for the Lord—for His own time of giving what is good, and for His own way of doing us good. V. MY DYING TIME IS IN THY HAND. We must all die alone. And while we live, we are dying. Are not times of weakening my strength in the way, of exanimating sickness, of excruciating pain, of wasting lungs, of struggling breath, of loss of appetite, of bodily and mental prostration, so many dying times to every one that is subject to them? Lessons: 1. To acknowledge Thy hand at all times. 2. To commit my spirit into Thy hand. 3. To make my prayer unto the God of my life. (*G. Robson.*) *Minute oversight*:—Some men practically regard only some of their times as in the hand of God. 1. We not infrequently regard as providential only that which we deem calamitous. A bridge falls, and scores of souls are hurried into eternity, and we cry—"Providence!" But a bridge stands for years, and hundreds pass across in safety, and so far as concerns that bridge, we "turn God out of court." 2. Sometimes we recognize God only when what we call large takes place. One man is killed, and nobody says anything about Providence; but a dreadful catastrophe occurs, and two or three hundred lives are lost; and we say, Providence! Judgment! We should remember that "large" and "little" are words expressive of our finite knowledge. 3. Sometimes we regard as providential only that which comes unexpectedly. When we put our money to usury and get a good percentage, we take our income as a matter of course; we say nothing about Providence. But unexpectedly we have a "windfall"—reaping where and what we have never sown—and we call the windfall "a providence." What comes in the ordinary course of things is no providence; so we poor, morally illogical creatures say; but whatever takes place that we cannot account for, we call a providential dispensation. This is nothing short of saying that God begins to work only at the point where human intellectual vision ceases; that the sphere of providence touches only the horizon of our mental view. "My times are in Thy hand." What then? This: expect comfort for all seasons. Be courageous at all times; and adore amidst all changes, an unchanging God. (*J. S. Swan.*) *The particularity of Divine Providence*:—I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. We shall be told, perhaps, that the doctrine of a particular Providence represents the Most High, as attentive to insignificant affairs,—gives to the Divine administration the aspect of overwhelming complexity,—and, is inconsistent with the majesty of the Supreme Being. 1. By no means do we deny, that the doctrine of a particular Providence does give to the Divine administration an aspect of overwhelming complexity. But then we are speaking, not of what the human mind can grasp, but of what the Supreme intelligence effects. Whoever admits the Being of a God, must connect with it the idea of infinity. No degree of attention, or variety of objects, can bewilder Him, whose understanding is infinite. 2. To oppose the consideration of Jehovah's infinite majesty to the doctrine of His providential administration is unscriptural, and absurd. The universe is a great and glorious whole;—but this great and glorious whole cannot be rightly preserved and governed, without the right preservation and government of all its parts. II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE IS TO BE EXPERIENCED. The doctrine of His providence as revealed in Scripture, gives us a glorious idea of His character. It leads us to conceive of His presence as filling immensity, and of His goodness as commanding universal confidence. It leads us to worship Him, and to confide in Him as the Lord of the universe, in whom all majesty is for ever centred, and from whom all blessings flow. But this doctrine appears to the greatest advantage, viewed in the "light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ";—and it is the knowledge of His glory, as a covenant Jehovah in the Son of His love, that gives to the faith of this doctrine its most beneficial effect. And well may the believer joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that all the perfections of the adorable I Am are engaged to promote his welfare and to effect his salvation. It shall only be added, that to derive benefit from the doctrine we have stated, it is necessary for us to avail ourselves of it by faith, especially when such benefit is most needed. When did David say in the prayer, and confidence of faith, "My times

are in Thy hand?"—it was when fear was on every side, and in so doing, he took an extended view of the providence of God, and honoured Him. The times of man are numerous and diversified;—he has times of sorrow, of trial, of affliction. As "there is a time to be born,—so there is a time to die." David takes the range of the whole,—and instead of planning for God, or deeming himself at the mercy of his enemies, he said, "My times are in Thy hand." Thus he met the storm which tried his faith, and the recollection of his so doing was grateful to his feelings, and subservient to communion with his everlasting friend when fresh trials occurred. (*W. Hutchings.*) *The measure of human life:*—There are three main causes which go to determine the length of time of every human life. 1. The first is physical. Every man has a constitution given him by God which has a certain amount of vital power and no more, which can bear a certain amount of strain and exertion and no more. When this stock is exhausted first one and then another organ gives up, and the end comes. How soon it will come is partly determined by circumstances. In one set of circumstances it is delayed; in another it is hastened; but no circumstances, no precautions, however incessant, can preserve it for ever. Not that strength of constitution is always allowed to be the measure of life. Its course is not seldom arrested by a violent death; it is cut short in battle, or by the executioner, or by lightning, or by railway accident, or by drowning, or by the murderer's knife, or by poison taken unwittingly, or by the bite of an animal, or by pestilence that walketh in darkness; and yet such events might suggest to those who believe in the providence of God that there are other and more influential, although less patent, causes that affect the length of human life, causes which we now proceed to consider. 2. Every man has a certain work assigned him to do, and when it is done, or ought to have been done, then he has to make room for others. What that work exactly is He knows who has placed us here. But most of us can only infer generally, and not always quite distinctly, why we were placed here, while none of us can dare to say certainly at the close of life that the work which our Maker meant us to do has been completed. Too many of us—alas!—never think of this solemn truth. The outward form of the work matters less than the presence or absence of the ennobling motive. The highest work may be even irretrievably degraded by the absence of that purpose. But, however this may be, with each of us a day comes when the work we had to do has been done or ought to have been done, and can be no longer done, and then the end comes. 3. Closely related to this cause, and yet distinct from it, there is a third. Every man is here on his probation or trial; he has a certain number of difficulties to encounter, a certain number of opportunities of which he may avail himself, measured unto him by a perfect justice which will deal with him accordingly. When these difficulties have been passed, in whatever manner, with whatever difficulty, the end comes. Who can say when the last difficulty has been surmounted, or when the last opportunity has been rejected or missed? We do not know. But our ignorance does not disprove the fact. He knows who has made us, who has placed us here on our trial, who removes us when we have passed it or have failed. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Divine superintendency of human affairs:*—Second only to the interest of that view of God as the Author of salvation through Christ, is this which ascribes to Him the presidency over all human affairs. I. IN WHAT SENSE THIS IS TRUE. 1. It is true of the times of men's entrance into the world, and their departure out of it. Hence the regular succession and perpetuity of the generations of men; and the appearance of men in the world with capacities and powers, exactly united to the age in which they live. If subtle adversaries against the truth appear, among their contemporaries, its most acute and intelligent defenders are found. And so of men's departure from this world: they not only come, but go at God's bidding. Till He give the command, nothing can force open the door of eternity for us; and when He does, nothing can keep us from entering it. It is said that the devil hath "the power of death." But this cannot mean natural death, for had he power over that, he would never suffer a bad man to live till he was converted, nor a good man afterwards. But it refers to the future death of torment which Satan as the executioner of Divine justice is commissioned to inflict. 2. It is true of the times of their worldly prosperity and adversity. We see this in the case of nations and empires, but it is true also of all the individuals comprising any nation. God fixes the bounds of every one's habitation and determines his lot. He does not interfere with the natural liberty of men, nor fail to allow, in a general way, for diligence and prudence to work out

their own reward, and vice and idleness to bring their own punishment. Yet, the final issues of things depend entirely on His will. It is good to recognize this for, so, by a conviction of the Divine wisdom and goodness, we are the more ready to acquiesce in all providential arrangements. 3. It is true of the times of men's gracious visitation and instruction. These periods form our day of grace. Thus we read of the Church of Thyatira, that Christ gave her "space to repent," and we read of "a time when Thou mayest be found," and of the "time of visitation." In addition to these there are seasons of refreshment for the Church at large. We read of "set times to favour Zion." Such times are the cordials of life, catches of sunlight upon our spiritual prospect, the wells of water and the palms at which we arrive as we journey through the wilderness.

II. WHAT ARE THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE. 1. Men should learn to value the times of gracious visitation and use them well, lest God take them away. This He may do, by taking away our lives, or our sensibility, or the means of grace themselves. 2. Good people should be comforted, since their times are in God's hands. What have we to fear? 3. This truth should reconcile us to the stroke of death when it comes to ourselves or others. (*J. Leifchild.*) *The Christian's lot in the Divine hand*.—The way of the Christian is often very difficult, and it would often be appalling, and life itself would be mournful were it not for the many consolations to which the pious mind may resort. To such consolations under difficulty the psalmist is clearly referring in our text. I. Briefly ILLUSTRATE THE FACT which the statement of the text comprehends. And—1. Consider those seasons which are to be especially regarded as under the Divine management. No doubt, all the events of life are under God's control. Some deny this, and men limit the interference of God to the great and momentous affairs of men. But reason and Scripture alike teach (see Ps. civ.) the universal superintendence of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Are not two sparrows sold?" thereby teaching this same truth. The time of prosperity is in God's hand, though men sadly forget this. And the time of affliction, and the time of death. Next—2. Observe the principles according to which this Divine arrangement is regulated. And (1) Sovereignty. God conducts all His dealings towards men as a Sovereign (see Jer. xviii.)—the potter and the clay. But—(2) There is also Justice. God can do nothing that is not right. Sovereignty and justice in God are never to be opposed to each other: they are ever associated. (3) Mercy. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." But for this where would man be? (4) Wisdom. All our events are under God's hand, and these are the principles on which they are regulated and controlled. II. THE RESULTS WHICH THIS RECOGNITION SHOULD PRODUCE. 1. Contentment. How could our affairs be better ordered? Let the poor and the afflicted remember this. 2. Trust, entire and unwavering confidence in God. How can we believe what has been said and not trust? 3. Gratitude. What abundant cause we have, when we look back on our lives, for this feeling towards God. Many an Ebenezer we can inscribe upon our pathway, and if so, should we not praise Him? 4. Anticipation. How calmly and confidently may we look on to the future. Foreboding and fear should be far from us. But to enter into all this we must be reconciled to God in the Lord Jesus Christ. (*James Parsons.*) *David's confidence in God's providence*.—If Cæsar could say to the fearful ferryman in a terrible storm, "Be of good cheer, thou carriest Cæsar, and therefore canst not miscarry," how much more may he presume to be safe that hath God in his company. A child in the dark feels nothing while he has his father by the hand. (*John Trapp.*)

Ver. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence, which cruelly, disdainfully, and, maliciously, speak against the righteous.—On *scepticism*.—To neglect those popular calumnies which are in circulation against any system either moral, religious, or political, is rather magnanimous than wise, and savours more of a generous contempt for danger than of prudent precaution against it. Bold assertions, and specious invectives often repeated, begin at last to be credited. There is too, besides, a fashion in thinking as in everything else, and the giddy part of mankind must ever appear in the newest philosophy. It is important, therefore, to mark the modes of thinking of the time, and especially those which are aimed against the Christian faith. It is a leading object with sceptics to bring this into disrepute. And they seek so to do by charging Christians with intolerance, bigotry, and narrowness of mind. The opposite virtues, candour, liberality, and freedom from prejudice, they claim for themselves. And the young are much

attracted by such professions, as it is natural they should be. Their vanity, also,—desire of notoriety, and their impatience, help the evil; soon they parade their disbelief, and sink into a state of complete scepticism. All this is very sad. A young man standing on the threshold of life, and just going into all the business of the world, with a heart in which every principle of right and wrong is thoroughly shaken and impaired! If not destined for great offices in public life, yet he is a brother, a son, a friend; he is to be a husband, and a father of children; some must trust him, and some must love him. Call it bigotry, and cover these notions with mockery and derision; but I say it would be better for this young man that the work of death were going on within him, that the strength and the roses of his youth were fading away, and that he were wasting down to the tombs of his ancestors, wept by his friends, and pitied by the world. Therefore let us examine the foundations of such scepticism. I speak not of all who disbelieve in Christianity, but of those who presume to look down upon Christians with anger and contempt. The fact is, disbelief not only in Christianity but in Providence is becoming general, and men are giving up all the wholesome restraints of religion. These are the dangers which now threaten us. We need not fear that we shall be manacled again by superstition, but that the golden chain which reaches from heaven to earth should be broken asunder, and not one link of it again be found. The infidel clings as tenaciously to what he denies, as the religionist does to what he affirms;—arm him with power, will he be more tolerant?—will he suffer you to build temples? to pray openly to your God, and to insult his doubts with the profession of a faith, which, in the deep wickedness of his heart, he judges to be the consummation of all absurdity?—Toleration is the creature of benevolence and of wisdom; what have the shallow sneers and scoffings of infidelity to do with this Heavenly forbearance? do not be mocked by such idle pretensions; if atheism ever rears its head among men, piety will mourn and bleed. Let us be thankful, therefore, for that small but invaluable class of men who, sincerely loving truth, and pursuing it with exquisite tact and skill, will even resist the wild unbelief of the day. Against ignorant and evil men they will steadily strive, and they will exert all their authority “to put to silence the lips which cruelly, disdainfully, and spitefully, speak against the righteous. (Sydney Smith, M.A.)

Ver. 19. **O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men.**—*Of fearing God and trusting in Him*.—I. EXPLAIN THESE DUTIES. 1. The fear of God. This sometimes comprehends the whole duty of man, but is more properly taken for a religious reverence of the Divine being and government. It is not dread of God that destroys the foundation of religion, because it looks upon God as arbitrary and cruel. But the fear of God ever consists in an habitual sense of His glory and perfections. None can be said to fear God who do not obey Him, and submit to His providential will. Such are the genuine effects of a godly fear. 2. Trusting in God. This implies dependence upon Him for all we need and a believing expectation that we shall not be disappointed. II. RECOMMEND THEIR PRACTICE. 1. So we shall secure to ourselves the Divine presence in all conditions of life. 2. This will support and compose our spirits under affliction. 3. It is the way to have our afflictions sanctified. 4. The practice of these duties will support and comfort us in a dying hour. 5. We shall secure to ourselves an undoubted title to eternal life. III. CONCLUSION. Learn—1. The excellency of the Christian institution which has so revealed God to us. 2. How miserable the state of those who fear not God. 3. Because of trusting too much to the creature. 4. Practice these duties. (Daniel Neal.) *Goodness wrought and goodness laid up*:—There are, as it were, two great masses of what the psalmist calls “goodness”; one of them which has been plainly manifested “before the sons of men,” the other which is “laid up” in store. There are a great many notes in circulation, but there is far more bullion in the strong-room. Much “goodness” has been exhibited; far more lies concealed. If we take that antithesis, then, I think we may turn it in two or three directions. I. THE GOODNESS ALREADY DISPOSED—“WROUGHT BEFORE THE SONS OF MEN”; AND THAT “LAID UP,” YET TO BE MANIFESTED. That distinction just points to the old familiar thought of the inexhaustibleness of the Divine nature. God’s riches are not like the world’s wealth. You very soon get to the bottom of its purse. Its “goodness” is very soon run dry. II. The contrast here suggests THE GOODNESS THAT IS PUBLICLY GIVEN AND

THAT WHICH IS EXPERIENCED IN SECRET. God does not put His best gifts, so to speak, in the shop-windows; He keeps these in the inner chambers. He does not arrange His gifts as dishonest traders do their wares, putting the finest outside or on the top, and the less good beneath. It is they who inhabit "the secret place of the Most High," and whose lives are filled with the communion of Him, who taste the selected dainties from God's gracious hands. III. THE GOODNESS WROUGHT OF DEATH, AND THE GOODNESS LAID UP IN HEAVEN. Here we see, sometimes, the messengers coming with the one cluster of grapes on the pole. There we shall live in the vineyard. Here we drink from the river as it flows; there we shall be at the fountain-head. Heaven's least goodness is more than earth's greatest blessedness. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *David's holy wonder at the Lord's great goodness*.—I. THE SUBJECT OF HOLY WONDER. "Thy goodness." 1. David is astonished at the great goodness of God which is laid up; the goodness of God which David had not as yet tasted, had not actually received, but which his faith realized, and looked upon as its fixed and settled heritage. (1) Think of how much He laid up in His eternal purpose, when He chose His people, and laid up for them the grand intention (Mal. iii. 17). (2) How great is the goodness of God, which He laid up in the covenant of grace. (3) Think of what He has laid up in the person of His Son—the same treasure, only now more clearly revealed to us, and brought forth in the person of the Well Beloved, so that we may the more readily partake of it. Pardon for all your sins; justification through faith in His sacrifice; life through His death; sanctifying power is in the blood of Jesus. All that you can want, for the whole journey from the place where you now are right up to the right hand of the Most High—all this is laid up for you. "Ye are complete in Him." (4) Think of what is laid up for you in the work, office, and mission of the Holy Spirit. Do not imagine that the standard of your attainment is the maximum of a Christian. Do not consider that you have obtained all that God is willing to bestow. The laid-up treasures in the Holy Spirit are probably vastly greater than any of us have ever been enabled to conceive. (5) The greatest goodness of all, we sometimes think, but perhaps improperly, is that goodness which is to be revealed when this life is over, which God has laid up for them that fear Him. The night lasts not for ever: the morning cometh. 2. There are some treasures which we enjoy now. (1) Think of that which Christ wrought out before the sons of men in Gethsemane's sweat and blood, in Gabbatha's scourging, in Golgotha's death. (2) Think of what God has wrought out for you in your own experience in the work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. Blessed be God, with a thousand imperfections and faults, still I find in my soul some kindlings of love towards His name. (3) We have also another instance of what God has wrought out for us in the shape of providential mercies. We have all some providences to remember which seem very special to us. II. THE FAVOURED PERSONS WHO ENJOY THE LORD'S GREAT GOODNESS. Why is it put so—"Laid up for them that fear Thee; wrought for them that trust in Thee;" unless it be true that he who trusts God fears God? The whole compass of the fear of God is gathered up into a centre in that point of trust. Why so? 1. Because trust is the root of true fear. To trust God is the root of all genuine religion. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Faith is the foundation of all the other graces. 2. Faith or trust is the test of the genuineness of religion. 3. Trust is the flower of the fear of God. The highest morality is to trust Christ. III. SOME THINGS THAT MAKE US SEE THAT GREATNESS. 1. Observe the multitude of these people. The goodness of God to any one of them is quite unsearchable, but what must be the great goodness which He has laid up for all His people! 2. Think of the undeservingness of each one of these. Many of them the chief of sinners. 3. Remember the need they were in. 4. Think of the great goodness of God to His saints in contrast to the great evil of man to them. Some of these saints have died cruel deaths. The most of them have had to pass through obloquy and scorn; but oh! how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast wrought in them, sustaining them all, and making them more than conquerors through Him that loved them! IV. WHAT SHOULD THIS TEACH US? 1. Should it not make us grateful to God for such wondrous kindness? Can you not afford a song? 2. Let it inspire us with confidence. All that you can want is provided in Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The treasury of God's goodness*.—Many years ago the ambassador of Spain, then the wealthiest country in Europe, once visited the court of Venice to arrange a treaty. One of the chief men of the palace led the Spanish ambassador to see

the sights, and amongst others took him to the treasury—huge coffers filled with heaps of gold and precious stones. The Spaniard asked for a staff; and thrust it down amongst the coins. The Venetian prince said, "Why are you doing that?" The ambassador replied, "I want to see if there be any bottom here! Ah, there is a bottom! But, O prince, there is no bottom to the treasures of my king!"—alluding to the gold and silver mines which then belonged to Spain. So, we say, there is an everlasting fulness in the treasury of God's goodness. His promises are always sure; His words are ever reliable; His goodness reaches to all. I. NOTICE THE OVERFLOWING GOODNESS OF GOD IN HIS FAVOUR TOWARDS MEN. Some will only show favour to their friends. But God has no line of exclusion. Standing before all men, He says, "I am the Friend of all." I think it is Mr. Goldwin Smith that says, "Society is formed of many circles. In the outermost ring, a man hangs on to the coat tails of the other above him, while he holds on to somebody else's coat tails higher still, until in the most exclusive circle sits the king." But with God and angels and perfect men there is world-wide friendship. God communes with every soul; and though we are the poorest outcast, we are within the circle of the loved ones for whom Jesus died. With God, there is no special favouritism. II. REMEMBER THE GREATNESS OF HIS FORGIVENESS. See the miracle on the sick of the palsy, and the words Christ spoke to him. If men knew the infinite compassion and love of God, they would starve to death or be burned alive rather than grieve Him by sin. III. COMFORT YOURSELVES WITH THE GOODNESS OF HIS POWER. To the most enslaved of Satan's captives, the fallen, the drunkard, He will give power to resist sin. There was said—not falsely—to be a reserve in the City of Glasgow bank. It only existed on paper. But there is a reserve, inexhaustible, in God's goodness. When you were born He gave to you the fortune of everlasting love; and that fortune is "laid up" for you. The prodigal thought he had spent all in the "far country," but he found an ocean of love still flowing in his father's heart. (*W. Birch.*) *God's reserve of goodness*:—The Divine goodness is not emptied out in heaps at our feet, when we first start in faith's pathway. Rather, it is kept in reserve for us until we need it, and then disbursed. 1. He laid up goodness in the creation and preparation of the earth. Think, for example, of the vast beds of coal laid up among earth's strata, ages and ages since, in loving forethought, that our homes may be warmed and brightened in these late centuries. Think of the minerals that were piled away in the rocks and hills, before there was a human footprint on the sand. Think of the laws of nature, as we call them, all arranged to minister to man's pleasure and benefit. Think of all the latent forces and properties that were lodged in matter, to be brought out from time to time, at the call of human need. Look at the medicinal and healing virtues, stored away in leaf, in root, in fruit, in bark, in mineral. 2. God laid up goodness for His people in His eternal covenant. It is a wonderful thought that before the world was made the plan of redemption was arranged, and blessings were laid up in the covenant of love for God's children. 3. The goodness of God was laid up for us by Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, obedience, sufferings and death. There is not a hope or joy of our Christian faith that does not come to us out of the treasures laid up by the obedience and the sorrows of our blessed Lord. 4. God has "laid up" His goodness. The word means hidden or reserved. The treasures were not all opened at the beginning. The world is many centuries old, but every new century has seen new storehouses unlocked; and still we have not received all that God has to give. (1) This is true of the world of nature. Originally the wants of men were few and simple; but as the race multiplied and civilization advanced, new needs continually arose; and to meet these new needs, new supplies have been brought forth from God's treasures. To illustrate: when primitive materials for light were about to be exhausted, the great reservoirs of oil in the bowels of the earth were disclosed; they were not then new made—they had been gathering there for ages—but the hidden stores were now first unlocked. And, further back, when the forests were being fast cut down and there seemed danger of a scarcity of fuel, the vast coal beds were found. In like manner, in these recent days, men are just discovering the powers of electricity—not a new creation, but an energy which has flowed silent and unseen through all space from the beginning, only to become known in these late days. (2) The same is true of the supply of the needs of individuals. No devout person can look back over the years of his own life and not see, how, always, just at the right moment, a treasure-house of goodness has been opened to meet his want. (3) The



same is true of spiritual goodness. Take the Bible for illustration. It is a great treasury of hidden and reserved blessing. There has not been a chapter, not a line, added to the Bible, since the pen of inspiration wrote the last words; yet we know that every generation finds new things in the blessed Book. A young Christian cannot understand the deeper truths of spiritual life until he advances further in personal experience. There are many things that can be learned only when the heart has been prepared to receive them. 5. It follows, then, that the storehouses of goodness are not opened until we come to where they are. They are placed, so to speak, at different points along our path; the right supply always at the right place. At every river there is a bridge. In every desert there are oases, with their springs of water and their palm trees. For those who fear God and walk in His ways there is not a real need of any kind along the entire path to heaven's gate, without its goodness laid up in reserve. But we shall not get the goodness until we reach the point of need, where the supply is laid up. 6. God's goodness is laid up in heaven. The Rabbins say that when Joseph had gathered much corn in Egypt, and the famine came on, he threw the chaff into the Nile, that when the people who lived in the cities below saw it on the water they would know there was corn laid up for them. So, what we have in this world of Divine goodness is little more than the husks of the heavenly fruits, which God sends down upon the river of Grace as intimations to us and assurances of glorious supplies laid up for us beyond the grave. Life is full of unfulfilled hopes. But if we are God's children we shall find in heaven the blessed substance of every empty shadow we have chased in this world in vain, and the full fruition of every fair hope that on earth seemed to fade. The best is yet on before, and to the Christian, death, instead of being a loss, or a going away from goodness, is a glorious gain and a going to the richest, fullest, most soul-satisfying good. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *The goodness of the Lord*:—I. AS A SPECTACLE OF SURPASSING BEAUTY. Creation, providence, redemption, call forth wonder, love, praise. II. AS A TREASURY OF INEXHAUSTIBLE WEALTH. What is seen, may, as it were, be measured; but what is unseen, is boundless. What is a river to the ocean! What is the landscape, that the eye can reach, to the vast unseen realms of the earth! What are the thousand stars that crowd the winter sky, to the millions upon millions that are hid in the depths of space! So with the goodness of God. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) III. AS A WORK OF INFINITE BENEFICENCE. *Goodness laid up*:—We can all understand what is meant by goodness bestowed, for it comes within the range of our own experience. And we could form an idea, though vague and indefinite, perhaps, of goodness promised. But goodness "laid up" is evidently that which we have not yet experienced and which is beyond all our expectations. Note, then, some of its marks and characteristics. I. IT CANNOT BE KNOWN UNTIL EXPERIENCED. We fret ourselves to know what the future shall bring, but we cannot know, only that there is goodness laid up for us. And this for special as well as ordinary wants. II. IT IS INEXHAUSTIBLE; it is always laid up. It is there for us through all time and eternity. There is no experience through which we may be called to pass, whether in life or death, against which God has not provided. III. SEE WHAT THIS TEACHES US OF GOD. 1. His graciousness. Even for the holiest of men it is all of grace. 2. His wisdom—how He knows and understands us and all our ways. 3. The fulness of His love. IV. AND AS TO OUR OWN DUTY. Seek for a full experience of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." All our past experience confirms the truth of our text. Then seek to know the Lord yet more and more. (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) *God's goodness*:—How much there is in God to excite our admiration. His power, but yet more His goodness. Let us, then, contemplate it. In the past, the present, the future. And think to how many God is good. And how long He has been so. Goodness is one of His essential, eternal attributes. And how uninterrupted. He never tires. And its abundance. He filleth His creatures with good. Its condescension. "What is man," etc. Its facility—He but opens His hand and the desire of every living thing is satisfied. To whom He shows this goodness—to those who were "dead in sin." And this notwithstanding their habitual ingratitude. "The ox knoweth his owner," etc. And then think of His reserved goodness—"laid up for them that fear Thee." What is earth to heaven, grace to glory! But though offered to all, it will be enjoyed only by those who fear and trust Him, and who do this openly "before the sons of men." Then how sinful is all sin, considering the goodness of Him against whom we sin. How evil our hearts must be that we do not repent.

How reasonable that His laws should be obeyed. What an appeal the Bible makes to our hopes! Let us not only admire but imitate the goodness of God. (IV. Nevins, D.D.) *Hidden treasure*:—If "our lives are hid with Christ in God" then we shall get our share of far better things than any outward prosperity or external deliverance or visible answers to petitions. The front rooms of the house which lie visible to the passers-by on the pavement may be richly enough furnished to indicate that well-to-do people dwell there. But away at the back, in rooms that no strange eye ever looks into, there are far rarer and more wonderful things. We must go deep into God, if we are to get all that God is able to give us. "I will give to him the treasures of darkness, and the hidden riches of secret places." Hide in God, that you may find the treasure that He has laid up for them that fear Him. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Ver. 20. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence.*—*Hid in light*:—The word rendered "presence" is literally "face," and the force of this very remarkable expression of confidence is considerably marred unless that rendering be retained. I. *THE HIDING-PLACE*. "The light of Thy face" is "secret." What a paradox! Can light conceal? Look at the daily heavens—filled with blazing stars, all invisible till the night falls. The effulgence of the face is such that they that stand in it are lost and hid, like the lark in the blue sky. "A glorious privacy of light is Thine." Light conceals when the light is so bright as to dazzle. They who are surrounded by God are lost in the glory, and safe in that seclusion, "the secret of Thy face." The old Greek mythologies tell us that the radiant arrows of Apollo, shot forth from his far-reaching bow, wounded to death the monsters of the slime and unclean creatures that crawled and revelled in darkness. And the myth has a great truth in it. The light of God's face slays evil, of whatsoever kind it is. Thus "the secret of His countenance is the shelter of all that is good." Nor need I remind you how, in another aspect of the phrase, the "light of His face" is the expression for His favour and loving regard, and how true it is that in that favour and loving regard is the impregnable fortress into which, entering, any man is safe. Only let us remember that for us "the face of God" is Jesus Christ. He is the "arm" of the Lord; He is the "name" of the Lord; He is the "face." All that we know of God we know through and in Him; all that we see of God we see by the shining upon us of Him who is "the irradiation of His glory and the express image of His person." So the open secret of the "face" of God is Jesus, the hiding-place of our souls. II. *GOD'S HIDDEN ONES*. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face." Whom? Those that flee for refuge to Thee. The act of simple faith is set forth there, by which a poor man, with all his imperfections, may yet venture to put his foot across the boundary line that separates the outer darkness from the beam of light that comes from God's face. Remember that Jesus Christ is the hiding-place, and that to flee to Him for refuge is the condition of security, and all those who thus, from the snares of life, from its miseries, disappointments, and burdens; from the agitations of their own hearts, from the ebullition of their own passions; from the stings of their own conscience, or from other of the ills that flesh is heir to, make their hiding-place—by the simple act of faith in Jesus Christ—in the light of God's face, are thereby safe for evermore. But the initial act of fleeing to the refuge must be continued by abiding in the refuge. But not only by communion, but also by conduct, must we keep in the light. An eclipse of the sun is not caused by any change in the sun, but by an opaque body, the offspring and satellite of the earth, coming between the earth and sun. And so, when Christian men lose the light of God's face, it is not because there is any variableness or shadow of turning in Him, but because between Him and them has come the blackness—their own offspring—of their own sin. You are not safe if you are outside the light of the countenance. These are the conditions of security. III. *WHAT THE HIDDEN ONES FIND IN THE LIGHT*. This burst of confidence in my text comes from the psalmist immediately after plaintively pouring out his soul under the pressure of afflictions. His experience may teach us the interpretation of his glad assurance. God will keep all real evil from us if we keep near Him; but He will not keep the externals that men call evil from us. Though it may leave the external form of evil it takes all the poison out of it and turns it into harmless ministers for our good. Again, we shall find if we live in continual communion with the revealed face of God, that we are elevated high above all the strife of tongues and the noise of earth. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The soul's*

*refuge in God*.—These are great words surely. They are an expression of David's confidence in God's power and will to hide His people in Himself. He is to be hid from "the pride of men," and from "the strife of tongues." I suppose that by these phrases we may understand the whole of that cruel and disturbing interference of one man's life with another's, which may take such an endless variety of forms. The abuse and fault-finding and frivolousness, the foolish quarrellings, strifes of social ambition, of business rivalry, from these we need a refuge as strong as David needed from his enemies. It is good to see how God comes and offers Himself, just here, to the human soul. "In the secret of My presence I will hide you." 1. Try first to understand how the soul finds refuge in communion with God. Of all the deep phrases in the Bible, where can we find one deeper than this of David, "Thou wilt keep him in the secret of Thy presence"? They mean that when a man is spiritually conscious of the presence of God it secludes and separates him from every other presence. Can we understand that? You go into a room full of people, and the tumult of tongues is all about you. You are bewildered and distracted. In the ordinary language of society, which sometimes hits the truth of its own condition rightly, you "feel lost." You lose yourself in the presence of so many people. You are merely part of the tumult. But by and by you meet your best friend there; somebody whose life is your life; somebody whom you sincerely love and trust; somebody who thoroughly satisfies you, and, by the contact of his nature, makes your taste and brain and heart and conscience work at their very best. As you draw near to him it seems as if you drew away from all the other people. As he takes hold of you, he seems to claim you, and they let you go. The worry and vexation of the crowd sink away as he begins to talk with you, and you understand one another. By and by you have forgotten that all those other men are talking around you. You have escaped from the strife of tongues. You are absorbed in him. He has hid you in the secret of his presence. And now it is possible, instead of your best friend, for God Himself to be with you, so that His presence is real, so that He lets you understand His thoughts and lets you know that He understands yours, so that there is a true sympathy between you and Him, if mere vision and hearing are not necessary to the Divine company, and as close to you—nay, infinitely closer—than the men who crowd you round, and whose voices are in your ears, the unseen God is truly with you, what then? Can any tumult of those men distress you? They parade their foolish vanities before you, and you hardly see them. This gives the very simplest notion of the meaning. Now we suppose that this becomes habitual, the constant temper and condition of a life. We suppose this friendly meeting with one who interests you thoroughly to pass into a friendship, pure, continual, devoted. If not in bodily presence, still in thought and sympathy, our friend is always with us. We always judge ourselves by his standard. We think what he would like or what he would condemn; we appeal even in his absence to his approbation. Is not the protection which we saw given to a man by his friend's company for an hour while they talked together extended now over all his life? 2. A true Christian faith starts with the truth of a personal redemption and leads the man up to personal duties. It takes this poor indistinguishable atom and says to him: "God knows you. To Him you are not only one of the race; He knows you separately; He made you separately. His Son died for you, and there is in you that which, in some way which belongs to you alone, can glorify Him. What are you doing in this feeble, unconscious life? Have you never heard of such a thing as responsibility? Get up; repent. Come to God. Get the pattern of your life from Him, and then go about your work and be yourself." If the man is really a Christian he hears that summons, and it is the birth of a true personality, of the real sense of himself in him. It is a revelation. 3. As we look over Christ's career, how can we describe its serenity and composure except in these words: "God hid Him in the secret of His presence from the pride of man, and kept Him secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." How the strife of tongues raged about Him all His life! From the time when Herod and the scribes debated where He was to be born, that they might murder Him, till the day when the people cried, "Crucify Him," and mocked Him as He hung upon the Cross. But, close to His Father always, clear in His own duty always, and always trying to help men so earnestly that He was not capable of being provoked by them, He was completely apart from all the strife. He was hid in the secret of His Father's presence. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

*Our refuge in God*.—All temples in ancient times were asylums. Whosoever

could flee to grasp the horns of the altar, or to sit, veiled and suppliant, before the image of the god, was secure from his foes, who could not pass within the limits of the temple grounds, in which strife and murder were not permissible. We too often flee to other gods and other temples for our refuges. Aye! and when we get there we find that the deity whom we have invoked is only a marble image that sits deaf, dumb, motionless whilst we cling to its unconscious skirts. As one of the saddest of our modern cynics once said, looking up at that lovely impersonation of Greek beauty, the Venus de Milo, "Ah! she is fair; but she has no arms." So we may say of all false refuges to which men betake themselves. The goddess is powerless to help, however beautiful the presentiment of her may have seemed to our eyes. There is only one shrine where there is a sanctuary, and that is the shrine above which shines the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; into the brightness of which poor men may pass and therein may hide themselves. God hides us, and His bidding is effectual, in the secret of the light and splendour of His face. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The refuge from talk*:—The author of this psalm had evidently suffered much from the talk of society. The strife of tongues had raged, and its armies had wounded him. And his experience is that of not a few. A large share of good men's troubles come out of the talk of others. Every man has his own little public, and that public talks, and their talk worries, so that the subject of it cries out for the wings of a dove that he may fly away and be at rest. I. *THE STRIFE OF TONGUES*. What an expressive phrase that is. How the element of contention asserts itself in the great mass of the world's talk. I remember being once at a fair in a foreign city, and before each booth stood a crier, sometimes aided by musical instruments; each crier endeavouring to raise his voice above the others in advertising the attractions of his show. It was a good picture of the world at large, where so many people have something to say, something which they are determined the world shall hear, no matter who else goes unheard. Then, how much debate—often useless—there is. And how selfish, carried on not for others, but the man's own advantage. And, then, there is the hiss of slanderous tongues striving against the innocent, and of gossiping tongues striving which can tell most news—bad or good, false or true, it matters not. Now, men get weary of this. We grow blinded and stunned by this excess of talk. We want leisure to think, and to weigh, and to adjust things. If perchance a great seed-thought has floated to us on these winds of oratory and debate, we would fain give it time to strike its roots deep down into our hearts and minds. And we grow ashamed of ourselves, because we are so often drawn into this current of talk about our neighbours. We hear the gossip, and we happen to know a fact or to have heard a piece of news, and almost ere we know it, in it goes into the common stock: and, if we are not very careful, we find ourselves falling into censorious talk, flinging out sharp arrows of sarcasm or pulling a neighbour's defects a little farther out into the light; and when we come to sit down and think over what we have said, unless we are very much hardened, we feel ashamed. II. *THE REFUGE*. 1. Now, it will not do for us to defy public talk, and to do, wantonly, what shocks social sentiment and multiplies talk. For the talk of society is by no means an unmixed evil. It hurts a good many men, and that unjustly; but it also keeps not a few men steady. It begets a wholesome fear. It is good to have a manly respect for public opinion, and a manly desire for society's esteem. Defiance of society, then, is not our refuge from the strife of tongues. 2. The world does not afford it. To get out of the reach of talk is to quit the world altogether, which is no man's duty but his sin if he attempts it. God provides better for men than by withdrawing them from the world where their work lies. 3. Man is delivered from temptation, not by being taken out of it, but by being helped to conquer it. In putting a man in right relations with Himself, God puts him in right relation to the world's talk. III. Let us look at some *ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS*, growing out of what has been already said. 1. There is the matter of slander and abuse. God does not always exempt good men from these. The man of science delights to show you how he can handle fire, and even go into the fire unhurt. That is a greater achievement than keeping away from the fire. A good man is given to thinking that, if his good name in the world is gone, if the world's talk casts up nothing but mire and dirt, it is all over with him. God shows him that he can live, and live quietly and cheerfully, on the simple fact of his conscious integrity before God. 2. Sometimes God saves one from the strife of tongues by putting him where he cannot talk and where others cannot talk to him. He sends a

calamity so overwhelming that his friends do not know what to say to him, and the man himself cannot reason about it, cannot argue, cannot explain, is simply reduced to silence. All that he can say is, "I am dumb; I open not my mouth because Thou didst it." He must find his only explanation in that simple fact, God did it. God seems to say to him, "Be still! There is only one thing you can know about this matter. Be still and know that I am God." 3. Again, God shields good men from the world's talk by hardening them against it. Exposure is often the best remedy for certain bodily ailments, and that is a kind of cure God often employs for the soul. Archbishop Whately, of Dublin, who died in 1863, was among the sturdiest men of his time, a man of undaunted courage, and withal of that genuine originality which awakens comment and opposition. Much of his official life was passed under a fire of censure. He once said of himself, "My stumbling-block most to be guarded against was the dread of censure. Few would conjecture this from seeing how I have braved it all my life, and how I have perpetually been in hot water, when, in truth, I had a natural aversion to it. So I set myself resolutely to act as though I cared nothing for either the sweet or the bitter, and in time I got hardened. But no earthly object could ever pay me for the labour and the anguish of modelling my nature in these respects. I have succeeded so far that I have even found myself standing firm where some men of constitutional intrepidity have given way. And this will always be the case more or less, through God's help, if we will but persevere from a right motive." 4. Again, God hides His servant from the strife of tongues by filling his hands with work for others. The more one is interested in the welfare of men, the less he will care for their talk; for a good deal of sensitiveness is merely selfishness, after all. That is a kind of sensitiveness which may be cured; and the best way of curing it is to get the life filled with Christ's spirit of ministry. Then what the world is saying of you will go by you like the idle wind. I remember how I went with the Christian commission during the war to help in nursing the sick and wounded. I was peculiarly sensitive to the sight of physical suffering, and my friends laughed at me and said, "You will faint at the sight of blood." And I quite feared I should. But it was not so. From the moment that I sat down beside the first man that met my eye, a poor fellow with a musket-bullet through his jaw, and tried, while I applied the cooling water, to drop a word or two about Christ and His rest for the weary—all my shrinking vanished. I thought only of those wounded men. I had little or no self-consciousness left. I saw only that colossal misery. That experience was worth a great deal to me, and that is the reason I tell it to you, for it illustrates a universal truth. Get yourself thoroughly interested in other people's bodies and souls; get the question, "What can I do for them?" uppermost in your thought, and the world's gossip about you will attract as little notice as the drifting sea-weed. 5. And I need scarcely add that this is the best way to keep ourselves from being sharers in the world's gossip. He who dwells in the secret of God's presence learns to take God's attitude toward infirmity and error—the attitude of One who remembers that His children are dust, and pities them accordingly. The tongue of such an one will not be a weapon of strife. These are some of the methods in which God hides His people from the strife of tongues; and all these methods are embraced in this one comprehensive fact—that He hides them in the hiding-place of His presence. Then, "your life is hid with Christ in God." If we are really Christ's, then back into the very bosom of His Father where Christ is hid, there He will carry us. We, too, shall look out and be as calm and as independent as He is. The needs of men shall touch us just as keenly as they touch Him, but the sneers and strifes of men shall pass us by as they pass by Him and leave no mark on His unruffled life. This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. In this world we must be exposed to the strife of tongues. Let God hide thee in the secret of His pavilion and thou needest not fear. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.)

Ver. 22. **For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes: nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee.—***Consolation for the despairing:*—I am as a watcher on the sea beach, telescope in hand, keeping guard for an appointed time. The watcher looks through his glass again and again, but a glance contents him so far as most of yonder gallant vessels are concerned, which are now in the offing; but by and by, his glass remains steadily at his eye; his gaze is fixed, and in a few moments he gives a

signal to his fellows, and they launch their boat. The explanation is, that he has noted signals of distress in one of the craft and, therefore, he has bestirred himself for her help. And so, too, the preacher is on the look-out for distress signals, and would render help where souls bound for eternity are foundering in doubt, ready to despair. I. **DEEP INWARD SORROW.** The man who wrote it was pained at his heart, and there are many in like case now. How came they so? Some are constitutionally depressed and desponding. Others are so, through great trial. Some, through secret sin unconfessed, which has festered into misery. Hurtful teaching, unwise ministry, often adds sorrow to the heart. And when the spirit sinks, the depression of men takes its own form according to what they are. In religious men it will take a religious form. It did so in the author of this psalm. What more dreadful apprehension could there be than this—"I am cut off from before Thine eyes." Many good men have felt like that. But God brings good out of it for the man himself and for others through him. II. **THE RASH EXPRESSION OF THIS SORROW.** "I said in my haste." David, more than once, spoke hastily. He had better have bitten his tongue. Better count a dozen before we speak when our minds are agitated. But such speech rests on altogether insufficient grounds. 1. Sad and distressful circumstances. But these do not prove that God has cast you away. If so, then God cast away His own Son. "The foxes had holes and," etc. 2. Feelings. But what more fluctuating and unstable than they? The wind does not veer more fitfully than does the current of our emotions. And yet despairing people are obstinate in their convictions. You cannot persuade them. For the declaration that God has forsaken us, or any man who seeks Him, is diametrically opposed to Scriptura. There is not one text which advises any man to despair of the mercy of God. It is dishonouring God to think so. Jesus says, "I can save." The sinner says, "You cannot," and thus makes Christ a liar. III. **A PLEADING CRY.** When David feared that he was cut off from God, he was wise enough to take to crying. It is a significant word. It tells of pain. Red eyes often relieve breaking hearts, and to cry unto God is a real relief. Prayer is the surest and most blessed vent for the soul. And then there came—IV. **A CHEERFUL RESULT.** "Thou heardest," etc. This blessing went beyond the promise. The promise is to believing prayer. But even when He meets with unbelieving ones, He gives faith, and so saves them. We are like lost children and cry, and God will not leave us to die in the dark. God heard David, then He will hear you and me. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A hasty expression penitently retracted:*—"I said in my haste," etc. That is a bit of genuine experience honestly told. How glad we ought to be that David never fell into the hand of an ordinary biographer, for then we had never been told what here we read. But it is comforting to find that even great men act at times as we often do. The experience of such a man as David cannot but be very instructive. Now in this text listen—I. **TO AN UTTERANCE OF UNBELIEF.** "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes." Note here—1. That unbelief is generally talkative—"I said." He had better not even have thought it, but if he did think of it he had far best not say it. I have heard it said, "If it is in the mind it may as well come out," but this is not true. If I had a rattlesnake in a box on this platform, I think you would none of you vote for the creature being let loose. Poison in a phial is deadly, but it will hurt no one until the cork is drawn, and then we cannot tell how far the mischief will go. If thou hast an ill thought, repent of it, but do not repeat it. Do as David did in another case, when he had a very ugly thought; he said, "If I should speak thus I shall offend against the generation of thy children." So he would not put his thought into words lest he should do harm. Alas, unbelief does not understand holding its tongue. It will prattle. 2. Its utterances are generally hasty. There was no reason for saying such a thing at all, and certainly not for being in a hurry to say it; for he said unto God, "I am cut off from before Thine eyes." But was it true? See if it be founded on fact; see whether after all you have not made a mistake. John Bunyan says of the pilgrim that he was much tumbled up and down in his thoughts. It means that he was in much confusion of mind. But why in such haste to write your blunders down. What a man says in his haste he generally has to repent at his leisure. Hasty deeds and hasty words make up the most horrible parts of human history. 3. They are often the result of quick temper. I fear we professing Christians are often out of temper with God. Too often such blasphemy enters into the human heart. 4. And are frequently exaggerated. See what David says here, "I am cut off," etc. No, David, no. It is not so.

You are cut off from much you love, but not from God. Some people always talk big about everything. There must be a very narrow line, fine as a razor's edge, between a lie and the unguarded expressions of exaggeration. Some people talk about their trials on a scale of a mile to the inch. Their afflictions are awful, they are dreadful, they are without parallel. They are altogether quite equal to Job and Jeremiah rolled into one. If you try to comfort them they will tell you at once that you do not know anything about the great deeps whereon they are doing business; you are only knee deep in the waters of trouble. Such is the way of unbelief. Let us leave it off. 5. They dishonour God. David does, as it were, blame God. "Before Thy very eyes I have suffered this." There never was a godly man cut off from God yet, and there never will be. If any of us have uttered words of unbelief let us call them back and drown them in our tears. But we have here also—II. AN EFFORT OF STRUGGLING FAITH. 1. He prayed to God. He says, "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications," etc. Oh, child of God, cry to a smiting God. Cry to God even when He seems to cast thee off. Sink or swim, live or die, do not doubt thy God, but still pray. 2. He prayed in downright earnest. His was a crying prayer. That is the prayer which is neither said nor sung, but cried; it drops from the eyes in tears. The words of a child the mother may not listen to, but let it cry and see if she will not come. And—3. God heard his prayer. God dealt with David not according to his unbelief, but his faith. His faith was small, but it was true. Thou who art in trouble, whoever thou mayest be, listen not to the voice of Satan who tempts thee to cease prayer. Do not say, "God will not hear me"; remember the words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." III. A TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE. "Nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications." God acted in the reverse way to David. 1. He spoke, but God did not speak. He was a listener. "Thou heardest." Not a word came from God: there had been too many words in the business already. 2. And there was no haste in God. God was quietly hearing while His petulant servant was fiercely complaining. It is a great thing for a minister who visits his people to be a good listener. The afflicted value this quality above gold. Such hearing has tender and precious sympathy in it. Hence the Scriptures say of God, "O Thou that hearest prayer." David does not cease to wonder that in his unhappy condition he had yet been regarded of the Lord: "Thou heardest the voice of my supplication." How beautiful that is! Further—3. There was no exaggeration with God. Unbelief exaggerates, but God does not. On the contrary, He diminishes the evil of His servants, till it comes to nothing. 4. And He did not dishonour His servant's prayer. He might have done so, but did not. He might have said, "If he thinks I have forsaken him, let it be so." But God did not do so. Look at the word "never-the-less," what it tells of the graciousness of God. CONCLUSION. 1. Repent heartily of every hard thought we have had of God. 2. Earnestly pray that if we think so wrongly we may keep our mouth as with a bridle. 3. Pray without ceasing, always pray let come what will. 4. Let us always speak well of the Lord's mercy. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Faith shaken*.—1. The faith of the godly may be shaken, and the strongest faith may sometimes show its infirmity. 2. Though faith be shaken, yet it is fixed in the root, as a tree beaten by the wind, keeping strong grips of good ground; though faith seem to yield, yet it faileth not, and even when it is at the weakest, it is uttering itself in some act, as a wrestler; for here the expression of David's infirmity in faith is directed to God, and his earnest prayer joined with it. 3. Praying faith, how weak soever, shall not be misregarded of God. 4. There may be in a soul at one time both grief oppressing, and hope upholding: both darkness of trouble, and the light of faith; both desperately doubting, and strong gripping of God's truth and goodness; both a fainting and a fighting; a seeming yielding in the fight, and yet a striving of faith against all opposition; both a foolish haste, and a settled staidness of faith; as here, "I said in my haste," etc. (D. Dickson.) *The eloquence of a cry*.—If you were walking the streets and heard or saw a poor child crying, you would be far more affected by it than by the oration of the pretended mechanic who is eloquently stating his wants to the dwellers on both sides of the way. A poor child crying in the dark, under your window, in mid-winter, in the snow, would move your pity and obtain your help. Even if it were a foreigner, and knew not a single word of English, you would fully feel its pleading. The eloquence of a cry is overwhelming, pity owns its power, and lends her aid. There is a chord in human nature which responds to a child's cry, and there is

something in the Divine nature which is equally touched by prayer. The Lord will not suffer a young raven to cry in vain, and much less will He suffer men who are made in His own image to cry to Him in the bitterness of their hearts, and find Him deaf to their entreaties. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 23. **O love the Lord, all ye His saints.**—*Constraining love*:—Love Jehovah—so the text runs. God the Father demands your love and deserves it, yea, the warmest affection of your hearts. And so also does the Son who redeemed you; and the Holy Spirit, by whom we are born again unto eternal life. But we speak, now, only of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him we say, "O love the Lord, all," etc. I. **THIS SENTIMENT SHOULD ANIMATE EVERY MIND.** 1. Love the Lord because His Father loves Him. It must always be right for us to love whom God loves. 2. The angels love Him. But shall they love Him who never redeemed them, and shall we, whom He hath redeemed with His precious blood, not love Him? 3. The saints in heaven love Him. We have many friends, very dear to us, there, and they all love Him. And with what intense love. We are cold creatures; like icebergs are our hearts, but theirs are like flames of fire. Shall we not love Him when we think how they love Him? 4. Everything that could possibly enamour our souls and constrain our love is found in Him. Does beauty attract? But what beauty can be compared to His? Wisdom—but whose like His? Perfect character—but where such as His? It were impossible to know Christ and yet not to have the heart affected by Him. 5. And chief of all, "because He first loved us." Think of His Incarnation, His agony, His cross. Think how He loved you when you were going on in sin. How, after having received you, He has loved you ever since, and what ill return you have made. II. **THE EXCELLENCIES OF LOVING JESUS.** 1. It will make you bear suffering for Him with joyousness. 2. And your service joyous also. 3. And obedience sweet. 4. And communion. 5. Love to Christ will make trust easy. Look at the child's love for its mother, and because of it, even in the midst of danger, it has no fear. But you who have never loved Him, you must trust Him first, give up your soul into His hands. Believe and live. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver 24. **Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.**—*The believer's source of strength*:—Many are almost despairing because of their trials and their temptations. But be our circumstances what they may, here is an antidote to them all. I. **THE PROMISE**—"He shall strengthen your heart." We have duties, many, varied, arduous. Often they are very trying; but this promise is for us. And so in our temptations. These are continually occurring, and we know not how to overcome them. Again this promise is given. But you ask, "How am I to attain this strength? Must I always go on sinning?" No, for—1. Faith is one grand means of victory over sin. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." 2. Watchfulness is another help; taking care to keep away from the occasions and inducements to sin: occupation in what is good and right, storing the mind with God's truth. 3. Prayer. This must by no means be neglected, the more we pray the stronger we are. 4. In mortifying sin be careful to leave no part remaining. Cut down the tree, but not this only, pull up the roots. 5. Guard your thoughts and desires. 6. If sin has gained power over you, at once—delay not a day—in seeking to subdue it. The longer it is left the greater will be the difficulty. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice," etc. But in our own strength no one is sufficient for these things; but the grace of God will help us. II. **TO WHOM THIS PROMISE IS MADE**.—"All ye that hope in the Lord." Not the sinless, the perfect, but, etc. They are such as put all their trust and confidence in Christ. (*S. Marshall, M.A.*) **Courage**:—The word comes from the Latin words, "cor" and "ago," meaning, the heart, and to put in motion. Courage, therefore, means the active heart, or the spirit of the heart. For it is that spirit which enables us to encounter danger without fear, and bear adversity with calmness. I. **WE ADMIRE PHYSICAL COURAGE**; but, after all, it is chiefly a constitutional endowment. If a man be full of animal courage, no credit to him; for he has to thank his father and mother for his vigorous body which inspires him to be brave. Physical, or animal courage is not a rare quality. Moral courage is the great thing, that which will inspire you to do right at all costs. It was that which Jesus had and which He helps us to acquire. II. **TRUE COURAGE WILL NEVER SWERVE FROM THAT WHICH IT KNOWS IS RIGHT.** Margaret Wilson, in the days of Charles II., was tied to a post on the



shore at the flow of the tide, but offered her life if she would obey the Church. Higher and higher the water rose, but she would not yield, and she died, crying out with her last breath, "Christ only is my Master." And many such martyrs there have been. That is moral courage. Dare to follow that which your conscience declares to be the truth; and be a Christian all out, though it may run you into risks of limb and life. It is the coward who is afraid to follow his convictions. Do not be a religious or political "turn-coat" against the secret conviction of your mind. "Toe the mark" in every sense in matters of truth and morals, and be brave enough to die rather than do wrong. III. HAVE YOU COURAGE TO SHOW YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN? Ah, how many there are who cannot do this. But why should you fear. Oh, be brave, not cowards. No doubt it does need moral courage to stand against ridicule, but be not jeered from the right. IV. IF YOU POSSESS TRUE COURAGE, YOU WILL NOT BE ASHAMED OF YOUR HUMBLE BUT HONOURABLE SURROUNDINGS. Don't have any false shame. Your hat may be battered, your shawl may be shabby, your coat may be an everyday one, but come up bravely to the house of God, and fear nobody. If the coat is the best God has given you, thank Him for it, and for all He has done for you. V. LET ME URGE YOU TO HAVE COURAGE TO DECIDE FOR JESUS CHRIST. (*W. Birch.*) *Strength for the courageous who hope in the Lord:*—Note—I. WHAT IS REQUIRED IN THE EXHORTATION—"good courage." How this is founded on hope. (Rom. viii. 24; 1 Thess. v. 8). How needful is it—1. When a man's sins press heavily upon him, and the cares and sorrows of earth weigh him down, how miserable is he if he have not hope. 2. Courage so founded is enduring. 3. And we are made more than conquerors over our spiritual enemies. II. THE PROMISE. "He shall strengthen your heart." 1. We are ignorant of our own hearts, and—2. We are unwilling to know. 3. Hence we cannot strengthen our hearts; the Gospel only can do this. III. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS PROMISE IS MADE,—those who "hope in the Lord." Those also distrusting themselves hope for all in Christ. (*G. C. Tomlinson.*) *Consolation for the troubled:*—I. BELIEVERS MAY HAVE GREAT NEED OF STRENGTH FROM GOD. 1. David knew this, and from his own experience declares what God will do for His people. 2. There are many trials which the believer shares in common with the men of this world. 3. There are others peculiar to himself. He may be calumniated and despised; deprived of the fellowship of other Christians; cast down by reason of his departures from God, so that he walk in darkness and hath no light. 4. And there are sorrows which come to him through the sins of others. Those near and dear to him living in sin; the wickedness of the world; the divisions of the Church and her cold-heartedness. II. THE HOPE WHICH THE CHRISTIAN HAS IN GOD. It does not make him neglect means. It is founded on the Lord Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection and intercession. It implies that his life is free from presumption and that he prays for the Divine blessing. III. CONCLUSION. 1. Expect trials. 2. Maintain faith. 3. Remember the promises. 4. Tell others of Christ. (*B. W. Noel.*) *The cure for a weak heart:*—I. AN APPROVED COMPANY. The text is addressed to—1. Men of hope. They have not yet entered into possession of their full inheritance; they have a hope which is looking out for something better on before; they have a living hope which peers into the future beyond even the dark river of death, a hope with eyes so bright that it seeth things invisible to others, and gazes upon glories which the unaided human eye has never beheld. Have you this good hope? 2. They hope for good things, for this is implied when the psalmist speaks of those that hope in the Lord, for no man hopes for evil things whose hope is in the Lord. 3. If you are the persons spoken of in the text, this hope of yours is rooted, and grounded, and established in the Lord: "all ye that hope in the Lord." You have not a hope apart from the ever-blessed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 4. Some of them do not get much beyond hope. "All ye that hope in the Lord." This passage picks up the hindmost, it seems to come, like the men with the ambulance, to look after the wounded, and carry them on at the same pace as those who march in the fulness of their strength. II. There is AN OCCASIONAL WEAKNESS apparent in many of those that hope in the Lord. 1. It is a dangerous weakness, for it is a weakness of the heart. They lose their courage, their joy departs from them, and they become timorous and fearful. 2. This weakness occurs on many occasions. (1) In the battle of life. (2) In times of temptation. (3) In the midst of great labour for the Lord. The best of men are but men at the best; and, therefore, who wonders if their heart sometimes faileth them in the day of suffering, in the hour of battle, or under the

broiling sun, when they are labouring for their Lord? 3. If this weakness of the heart should continue, it will be very injurious. (1) At the present time, I believe that it restricts enterprise. (2) It endangers the success of the best workers. (3) It pleads many excuses. III. A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION. I like the way this is put. It is not alone, "Be of good courage"; there is an "and" with it: "and he shall strengthen your heart." At the same time, the exhortation is not omitted. It does not say, "He shall comfort your heart, therefore you need do nothing." They err from the Scriptures who make the grace of God a reason for doing nothing; it is the reason for doing everything. 1. If you want to get out of diffidence, and timidity, and despondency, you must rouse yourselves up. Do not sit still, and rub your eyes, and say, "I cannot help it, I must always be dull like this." You must not be so; in the name of God, you are commanded in the text to "be of good courage." 2. Do you not think that your God deserves to be trusted? What has He ever done that you should doubt Him? 3. If thou art not of good courage, what will happen to thee? I would not have you deserve the coward's doom, and speak of it as "retiring." No, get not into that class; be thou rather like that soldier of Alexander, who was always to the front, and the reason was that he bore about with him what was thought to be an incurable disease, and he suffered so much pain that he did not care whether he lived or died. Alexander took great pains to have him healed, and when he was quite well, he never exposed his precious life to any risk again. Oh, I would rather that you should be stung into courage by excessive pain than that you should be healed into cowardice! Christ ought not to be served by feather-bed soldiers. IV. A CHEERING PROMISE. "He shall strengthen your heart." God alone can do this. 1. Sometimes by gracious providences. 2. By the kindly fellowship of friends. 3. By a precious promise. 4. Beside all that, God the Holy Spirit has a secret way of strengthening the courage of God's people, which none of us can explain. Have you never felt it? You may have gone to your bed, sick at heart, "weary, and worn, and sad," and you wake in the morning ready for anything. Perhaps, in the middle of the night, you awake, and the visitations of God are manifested to you, and you feel as happy as if everything went the way you would like it to go. Nay, you shall be more happy that everything should cross you than that everything should please you, if it be God's sweet will. You feel a sudden strengthening of your spirit, so that you are perfectly resigned, satisfied, prepared, and ready. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

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### PSALM XXXII.

**VERS. 1-7. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**—*The penitential psalms*:—Since the time of Origen, seven of the psalms have borne the name of Penitential; namely, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. They were used in the special additional services appointed for Lent, and were selected with reference to the sprinkling of the leper seven times, and to the command to Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan; or, as others say, as corresponding to the seven deadly sins. These psalms are not all expressions of contrition for personal sin; nevertheless, they all recognize sin as the source of corruption and trouble. We may find in them every element of a true repentance according to the Gospel standard. They reveal—I. A RECOGNITION OF THE RADICAL NATURE OF SIN. This is especially marked in the 51st. There we find the confession of a sinful nature as well as of sinful acts; the ever-living consciousness that God looks at the heart and not merely at the deed. II. THE FEELING OF THE BURDEN AND SORROW OF SIN (Ps. vi. 2, 3; xxxii. 3, 4; xxxviii. 2-10; cii. 9, 10; li. 3). III. CONFESSION OF SIN. This involves our viewing the sin in the same way in which God views it. IV. REPENTANCE FURTHER INVOLVES CONDUCT. The prayer for pardoning grace is accompanied with the petitions, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk," "Teach me to do Thy will" (Ps. cxlii. 8-10). Sinful associations are renounced, and the workers of iniquity are bidden to depart (Ps. vi. 8). V. REPENTANCE ISSUES IN INSTRUCTION. David, having

been forgiven, says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee" (Ps. xxxii. 8, 9). When God's face shall be hidden from my sins, and a clean heart shall be given me, "then will I teach transgressors thy ways" (Ps. li. 13-15). VI. REPENTANCE ISSUES IN JOY. It is the joy of forgiveness. The man is not blessed who can forget his sins; who can divert his mind from them; who can temporarily escape their consequences. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." From this point, the psalm is all joy. "Thy hand was heavy upon me," but now I lean upon it, and it leads me into green pastures and folds me to a Father's heart. I fear not the "floods of great waters" now. "Thou art my hiding-place," Thou from whom I strove of late to hide. Thy word, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierced me with a thousand pangs; but now "I hope in Thy word." I remembered Thee and was troubled; but now "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble." Thou, from whose voice I fled, Thou, whose heavy hand dried up the springs of song in me, Thou shalt fence me about with songs. VII. REPENTANCE ISSUES IN WARNING. This is powerfully brought out in Ps. xxxii. 9. The bridle which restrains the beast is often its ornament. The fact is familiar that animals have a kind of pride in the gaudy trappings which are the signs of their degradation, the proofs that they cannot be appealed to on the grounds of reason and conscience. So it is often true that a sinful man is proud of his rebellion against God, and boasts of it. If he but knew it, this is his humiliation. It stamps him as a creature which does not realize its relations to God and eternity. God would gladly deal with him as a free man, on generous terms; but if he refuses the guidance of the eye, he must take up with bit and bridle. If men will not come nigh unto God, and fall in with His gracious economy, they must be sternly restrained from interfering with it. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The gate to the confessional*.—If the world forgives, it generally vouchsafes a kind of stinging forgiveness which perpetuates the smart of the crime. It is at no pains to "cover" the sin. We can say of one thus forgiven, "He is tolerated: he has a new chance given him," but scarcely—"he is blessed." This psalm, on the contrary, while it is one of the saddest, is at the same time one of the most joyful of the inspired lyrics. It is no less the record of a bitter, penitential sorrow, than the expression of a heart full of praise. It comes to us to-day to tell us that the worst sinner, forgiven by God, is a happy man. I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS. When a shipwrecked sailor has been rescued from death, and is sitting warm and dry by the fire, his first thought, his first utterance is one of congratulation. "How fortunate I am to have escaped. How thankful I am to those who saved my life." After this feeling has found vent, he will go on to tell the story of his shipwreck and of his rescue. Hence nothing could be more natural than the ordering of this psalm. David is a rescued man; and thanksgiving, and congratulation on his present security come to his lips, before he tells the story of his moral shipwreck. 1. His sin is taken away. 2. His sins are covered or hidden, and that from God; not from men. However men may comment or rail, it matters little while God says "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." 3. He is treated as innocent. The Lord does not impute nor lay the iniquity to his charge. II. THE RESULT OF HIS ATTEMPTS TO COVER HIS SIN. Perhaps he sought to still that secret voice which was urging him to lay bare his sin, by plunging into the business of state, or into the pleasures of his court; but all in vain. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old." The very seat of strength was invaded. His body suffered from the terrors of remorse. What an image is this that follows—the pressure of a strong hand, hampering all free activity. No joy in work or in study any more. The healthy competitions of business, the free play of social converse, the sweet interchanges of the household, all repressed and devitalized by this painful consciousness of guilt. What ails the man who was but lately so sparkling, so magnetic, so enthusiastic? "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me," etc. III. THE REMEDY WHICH HE FOUND. Confession. "Well," you say, "if God knows all about my sin, why should I confess it?" God knows what you want in prayer before you ask Him, and yet you will not get it if you do not ask Him. He has conditioned forgiveness upon confession, just as He has conditioned finding upon seeking. Confession implies—1. Viewing your sin in the same light in which God views it. 2. Renunciation. IV. THE RESULT OF ITS APPLICATION. He first sums up the result in a single sentence: "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." He has a whole catalogue of joyful consequences of his confession

to present to us; but he is careful to make it perfectly clear at the outset that all these consequences are linked with forgiveness. And now what a sudden change reveals itself. The tone of the last few verses has been like the sigh of the wind through the dry valleys. Now we begin to hear the running of streams. The abject penitent, moaning day and night under God's heavy hand, is transformed into a joyful singer of praises; a prophet, with a fresh lesson of God's goodness kindling on his lips. V. A PRACTICAL LESSON FOR OUR INSTRUCTION. Christ bade Peter make use of his own terrible sifting to strengthen his brethren. David anticipates the lesson; and these words of his have been the text-book of penitent souls from his time to the present. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;" this way of repentance and confession in which I have walked. Be not obstinate in refusing to walk therein. Heed my experience, ye who feel the pressure of God's hand, whose moisture is turned into the drought of summer. (*Ibid.*) *The blessedness of forgiveness*:—I. REASONS WHY SUCH MUST NEEDS BE BLESSED WHOSE TRANSGRESSIONS ARE FORGIVEN. 1. Because God doth pronounce them blessed. 2. Because they are delivered from the greatest evil, and that which exposes them to the greatest misery, and which alone can deprive them of eternal happiness. 3. Because they are taken into covenant with God. (1) They are taken into God's favour. (2) They are taken into God's family. (3) They are under God's providence. (4) They have free access unto God in prayer. (5) They have communion with God in all His ordinances: and thus it is with all pardoned persons, and therefore they are blessed. 4. Because they are in a better state than Adam was in his first creation. (1) In respect of innocence. (2) In regard of the image of God, that is repaired in all those that are pardoned.—When God forgiveth their sin, He changeth their nature; and that faith which justifieth the person doth also "purify the heart" (Acts xv. 9). 5. Because they shall be blessed. (1) Show what the future blessedness is, which pardoned persons shall have. They shall live and take up their eternal abode in a most blessed and glorious place (Heb. xiii. 14; xi. 10). They shall have most blessed and glorious company to converse with: saints, angels, the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, etc. They shall attain a blessed and glorious state of perfect peace and tranquillity, wealth and plenty, honour and dignity, holiness and purity, perfect happiness and glory in soul and body. (2) Prove that pardoned sinners shall assuredly attain this future blessedness. God's decree of predestination and election. God's covenant and promise. The union of all pardoned persons unto Christ and His undertaking for them to bring them to eternal blessedness. The right which they have to eternal blessedness: justification; adoption; the certainty of all pardoned persons' perseverance in grace unto the end. 3. Show how this future eternal blessedness of heaven renders pardoned persons blessed here upon earth. (1) They have a sight of their future blessedness, and the excellence of it. (2) Their hopes of it, that they shall one day have possession of so great felicity. 3. They have the beginnings of future blessedness here, in this life, in the work of grace, and sometimes foretastes and first-fruits of it, through the witness, seal, and earnest of the Spirit; and this renders them blessed in this life. II. HOW THIS BLESSEDNESS MAY BE ATTAINED. 1. Some things must be believed. (1) The doctrine of Christ's satisfaction for sin. (2) The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ. 2. Some things must be done. (1) They must get conviction of sin. (2) They must make confession of sin. (3) They must by faith make application of Jesus Christ. (4) They must forsake sin. (5) They must make supplication and earnest prayer unto God for pardoning mercy. (6) They must forgive others. (*T. Vincent, M.A.*) *Sin and forgiveness*:—I. THE SOLEMN PICTURE OF VARIOUS PHASES OF SIN. 1. The word translated "transgression" seems literally to signify separation, or rending apart, or departure; and hence comes to express the notion of apostasy and rebellion. So, then, here is this thought, all sin is a going away. From what? Rather the question should be—from whom? All sin is a departure from God. And that is its deepest and darkest characteristic. And it is the one that needs to be most urged, for it is the one that we are most apt to forget. The great type of all wrongdoers is in that figure of the Prodigal Son, and the essence of his fault was, first, that he selfishly demanded for his own his father's goods; and, second, that he went away into a far country. Your sins have separated between you and God. 2. Then another aspect of the same foul thing rises before the psalmist's mind. This evil which he has done, which I suppose was the sin in the matter of Bath-sheba, was not

only rebellion against God, but it was, according to our version, in the second clause, "a sin," by which is meant literally missing an aim. (1) "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever;" and whosoever in all his successes fails to realize that end is a failure through and through, in whatever smaller matters he may seem to himself and to others to succeed. He only strikes the target in the bull's-eye who lets his arrows be deflected by no gusts of passion, nor aimed wrong by any obliquity of vision, but with firm hand and clear eye seeks and secures the absolute conformity of his will to the Father's will, and makes God his aim and end in all things. (2) But there is another aspect of this same thought, and that is that every piece of evil misses its own shabby mark. "A rogue is a round-about fool." No man ever gets, in doing wrong, the thing that he did the wrong for, or, if he gets it, he gets something else along with it that takes all the sweet taste out of it. All sin, big or little, is a blunder, and missing of the mark. 3. Yet another aspect of the ugly thing rises before the psalmist's eye. In reference to God evil is separation and rebellion; in reference to myself, it is an error and missing of my true goal; and in reference to the straight standard and law of duty, it is, according to the last of the three words for sin in the text, "iniquity," or, literally, something twisted or distorted. It is thus brought into contrast with the right line of the plain straight path in which we ought to walk. The path to God is a right line, the shortest road from earth to heaven is absolutely straight. The Czar of Russia, when railways were introduced into that country, was asked to determine the line between St. Petersburg and Moscow. He took a ruler, and drew a straight line across the map, and said, "There!" Our autocrat has drawn a line as straight, as the road from earth to heaven; and by the side of it are the crooked wandering ways in which we live. II. THE BLESSED PICTURE OF THE REMOVAL OF THE SIN. It is "forgiven," "covered," "not imputed." The accumulation of synonyms not only sets forth various aspects of pardon, but triumphantly celebrates the completeness and certainty of the gift. As to the first, it means literally to lift and bear away a load or burden. As to the second, it means plainly enough to cover over, as one might do some foul thing, that it may no longer offend the eye or smell rank to heaven. And so a man's sin is covered over and ceases to be in evidence, as it were, before the Divine Eye that sees all things. He Himself casts a merciful veil over it and hides it from Himself. A similar idea, though with a modification in metaphor, is included in that last word, the sin is not reckoned. God does not write it down in His great book on the debit side of the man's account. And these three things, the lifting up and carrying away of the load, the covering over of the obscene and ugly thing, the non-reckoning in the account of the evil deed; these three things, taken together, do set forth before us the great and blessed truth that a man's transgressions may become, in so far as the Divine heart and the Divine dealings with him are concerned, as if non-existent. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THIS REMOVAL OF SIN. 1. The blessedness of deliverance from sullen remorse and the dreadful pangs of an accusing conscience. 2. The blessedness of a close clinging to God in peaceful trust, which will ensure security in the midst of all trials and a hiding-place against every storm. Only through forgiveness do we come into that close communion with God which ensures safety in all disasters. 3. The blessedness of a gentle guidance and of a loving obedience. "Thou shalt guide me with Thine eye." No need for force, no need for bit and bridle, no need for anything but the glance of the Father, which the child delights to obey. 4. The blessedness of exuberant gladness; the joy that comes from the sorrow according to God is a joy that will last. All other delights, in their nature, are perishable. The deeper the penitence the surer the rebound into gladness. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Sin forgiven*.—I. THE BURDEN. 1. He uses three words, and each word reveals a different aspect of his comprehensive conception. (1) He calls it his "transgression." The word is significant of a "breaking-loose." The figure is almost that of a horse that has broken the traces, and is bolting. The cords have been snapped. The yoke has been thrown aside. The man conceives himself as in revolt. He is a rebel, a deserter. He has broken the bands; he has discarded all discipline, and has roamed in ways of unconsidered licence. (2) He also calls it his "sin." He has deflected from the prescribed line of life. He has chosen his own end. He has missed the mark. His life "has not arrived." It is characterized by failure. (3) He also calls it his "iniquity." His life is marred by crookedness and deformity. Guilt has sunk into his

faculties, and all of them have been twisted in a certain perversity. Such is the man's vivid consciousness of his own estate. He is a rebel of perverse inclinations, and wrenched by self-will into spiritual deformity. 2. Now, concerning this burning consciousness of personal sin, we are told the man "kept silence." He invited no fellowship, either on the part of man or of God. How did such secret, silent burden affect the man's life? (1) "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." There is a wonderful intimacy between the flesh and the spirit. To sap the forces of the one drains the energy of the other. This man, with the secret, unspoken consciousness of sin, dragged along a weary body. He was continually tired. (2) "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." He moved in a condition of constant depression. He felt that "the hand of the Lord" was weighing upon him! That is a pathetic word. "The hand of the Lord" is usually a minister of succour, of lifting, of resurrection! But here the "hand of the Lord" is regarded as the minister of depression, and the man is held down in mental flatness and imprisonment. (3) "My moisture is turned into drought of summer." He was the victim of a dry, fierce heat! No cool, cooling influences breathed through his soul. He was "heated hot with burning fears." II. THE CONFESSION. The psalmist had a threefold description of sin, now he has a threefold description of its confession. "I acknowledged my sin." "Mine iniquity have I not hid." "I confessed my transgressions." The marrow of all these pregnant phrases is that the psalmist made a clean breast of it. He hid nothing from the Lord. There was no unclean thing concealed within his tent. He opened out every secret room. He gave God all the keys. Everything was brought out and penitently acknowledged. He confessed in particulars, and not in generals. He "poured out his heart before God." He emptied it as though he was emptying a vessel in which no single unclean drop was allowed to remain. His confession was made in perfect frankness and sincerity. III. THE LORD'S RESPONSE. 1. His transgression was "forgiven"—lifted and carried away out of sight. 2. His sin was "covered." "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." Grace rolls over like an immeasurable flood, and our sins are submerged beneath its mighty depths. 3. His iniquity was "not imputed." Forgiven sins are never to be counted; they will not enter into the reckoning. They will not influence the Lord's regard for us. In His love for us, forgiven sins are as though they had never been. Here, then, is the completeness of the freedom of the children of God. Sin forgiven! Sin covered! Sin no longer reckoned! It is not wonderful that this once tried, depressed, feverish soul, tasting now the delights of a gracious freedom, should cry out, "Blessed is the man!" (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The blessedness of pardon:*—In the words you have an emphatical setting forth of a great and blessed privilege and a description of the persons who shall enjoy it. We notice the three expressions, "forgiven," "covered," "imputeth not," and the earnestness and vehemency which this repetition implies. As to the meaning, the transgressions forgiven tells of the relief from a heavy burden (*Matt. xi. 28*). The "sin covered," alludes to the covering up of or removing that which is offensive out of sight (*Deut. xxiii. 14*). The "imputeth not iniquities" tells of God's not putting them down to our account (*Matt. vi. 12*). The object of pardon is described under the various terms of iniquity, transgressions, sin. And the earnestness of the psalmist is because he himself has known the blessedness of God's forgiveness. The doctrine of the text is, therefore—That a great degree of our blessedness lies in our obtaining the pardon of our sins by Jesus Christ. I. THE NECESSITY THAT LIES UPON US TO SEEK THIS PARDON. 1. We all have a reasonable nature, and this implies a conscience, for a man can reflect upon his own actions. 2. But conscience implies a law by which good and evil are distinguished. 3. Law implies a sanction or confirmation by penalties and rewards (*Deut. xxx. 15*; *Ps. vii. 11–13*). 4. Such sanction implies a judge who will take cognizance of our conduct in regard to the law. The heathen knew this (*Rom. i. 32*). Providence showed it (*Rom. i. 18*). And we are to expect the coming of such judge (*Acts x. 42, 43*; *iii. 19–21*). 5. A judge implies a judgment day, or some time when his justice must have solemn trial, when he will reckon with the guilty (*Heb. ix. 27*; *Acts xxiv. 25*; *xvii. 31*). 6. This implies the condemnation of the guilty, unless God set up another court for their relief. For man is utterly unable to fulfil the law (*Rom. viii. 1*). "The law is weak through the flesh." 7. This God hath done in Christ and the Gospel. It is not a case of forgiveness as between man and man, but there must be satisfaction

to Divine justice. Therefore Christ hath died (Gal. iv. 5; Rom. iii. 25, 26). 8. This being done conveniently to God's honour, we must sue out our pardon with respect to both covenants—that of nature, and that in Christ. We must bring a true repentance (1 John i. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 31). And we must thankfully accept the Lord's grace that offers pardon to us. II. OUR MISERY WITHOUT THIS PARDON. 1. We must bear the heavy burden of our sin (Ps. xxxviii. 4; Gen. iv. 13; Prov. xviii. 14). 2. Sin renders us odious in the sight of God (Prov. xiii. 5). "Sin is loathsome." And the sinner is so, to God, to the righteous, to the indifferent, to other wicked men, and to himself (Ps. xxxii. 3). 3. Sin is a debt that binds the soul to everlasting punishment (Luke xii. 59). How blessed, then, must be he unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. III. THE CONSEQUENT BENEFITS OF THIS PARDON. 1. It restores us to God (Ps. cxxx. 4). 2. It lays a foundation for solid peace and comfort in our own souls. 3. We are now capable of eternal life. IV. THE APPLICATION. 1. Let us bless God for the Gospel. Think of the darkness of the heathen world on this matter (Micah vi. 7). And the Jews also (Heb. ix. 9). 2. Let us put in for a share of this blessedness. Pray day by day for it. Christians as well as others. (*T. Manton.*) *Persuasions to seek after the blessedness of pardon:*—I. TILL YOU ARE PARDONED YOU ARE NEVER BLESSED. Is he happy who is condemned to die, although he hath plentiful allowance till the day of his execution? So neither can earthly good make the sinner blessed. II. NOTHING ELSE BUT PARDON WILL SERVE OUR TURN. Forbearance on God's part will not, for forbearance from punishment does not dissolve the obligation to punish. Respite is not pardon. Nor, either, forgetfulness on our part. They are not happy that have the least trouble, but they that have the least cause. A benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness. God hath neither forgiven nor covered their sin. III. THE EVILS WHICH FORGIVENESS FREES US FROM AND THE GOOD WHICH DEPENDS UPON IT. 1. The evils. Guilt, and therefore punishment. 2. The good. You cannot enjoy God till you are forgiven. IV. WHAT MUST BE DONE THAT WE MAY BE CAPABLE OF THIS BLESSED PRIVILEGE. 1. For our first entrance into it. (1) We must have repentance and faith (Acts x. 43; xi. 38; Luke xxiv. 47). Repentance respects God, to whom we return: faith, Christ, by whom we return. And these are necessary for the glory of God. It is not fitting that pardon and life should be had without any conditions. And they are necessary, too, for our comfort. 2. For our continuance in it. The first truths are gone over again and again; and there is a new obedience (1 John i. 7). And there is daily prayer. 3. For the recovery out of grievous lapses and falls. In them there is required a particular and express repentance; and repentance and faith must be carried with respect to those four things that are in sin: *culpa*, the fault, *reatus*, the guilt, *macula*, the stain and blot, and *pœna*, the punishment. 1. For the fault in the transgression of the law, or the criminal action. See that the fault be not continued; relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound be soundly closed; as Lot doubled his incest, and Samson goes in again and again to Delilah. 2. The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance, and humiliation before God, and suing out our pardon in Christ's name. There must be a solemn humbling for the sin, and then God will forgive us. Suppose a man forbear the act, and never commit it more (as Judah forbore the act, after he had committed incest with Tamar, but it seems he repented not till she showed him the bracelets and the staff); yet with serious remorse we must beg our peace humbly upon the account of our Mediator. Therefore something must be done to take away the guilt. 3. There is the blot or evil inclination to sin again. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again; the evil influences of the sin continue. Now the root of sin must be mortified, it is not enough to forbear or confess a sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well. 4. There is the punishment. It will not be eternal. We are delivered from that. But there may be temporary evils (Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33). What, then, is our business? Humbly to deprecate these judgments. "Lord, correct me not in Thine anger," etc. (*Ibid.*) *True blessedness:*—There is a history of India, which was written by a man who never left his native land, nor set eye or foot on that distant shore; and yet, strange as it may appear, it is said to be the best work on the subject, presenting the most graphic pictures of its oriental scenery, the most satisfactory history of its conquests and its conquerors, the best account of the manners, and customs, and habits of its people, with their

variety of races, and tongues, and castes, and religions. In some such way the beauties of Christianity have been portrayed; the pictures being not so much, or rather not at all, a transcript of the artist's feelings—what his own eyes have seen and his own heart has felt—not the expression of a Christian's experience, but the triumphs of a poet's fancy. And so the preacher may, after all, be but a painter, and saving others, he may be himself a castaway. A man who can go to the pulpit, or a man who can stand on the level of other men, and say, "Arise, for I have seen the land, and behold it is very good," can speak with a point and a power which no fancy or genius can bestow. Such was the position of the man who expressed the sentiment of my text. The world has seen few poets like the royal psalmist; yet here is not a flight of the poet's fancy, but the expression of a good man's experience. The blessedness of my text is not a thing that David fancied; it is a thing that David felt. And he gained this blessedness by going to God for it, confessing his sin and finding forgiveness. He went as the prodigal, saying, "I have sinned," and he gratefully acknowledges, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." I. THIS BLESSEDNESS IS ATTAINABLE BY US NOW. Sin is a terrible thing, for it incurs the wrath of God. Man's wrath can do but little in his favour either. A few feet of earth above our heads, and what is the world's smile or frown then? But God's wrath and favour are very different things. They stretch on into and throughout eternity. How blessed, then, must be His favour, how terrible His wrath! But, with His favour, what need we fear? II. THE EXTENT OF THIS BLESSEDNESS. Transgression forgiven, sin covered, iniquity not imputed. How is all this accomplished? Not in the way of the unjust steward, by making a composition, as merchants do. God demands all. And yet we are saved. Christ paid the penalty, and thus man is saved the punishment. This is the very palladium and pillar of the believer's peace. All is forgiven, all covered. III. BLESSEDNESS IS WHAT WE ALL SEEK AFTER, AND IT IS FOUND HERE. This alone is true blessedness. Nothing else is worthy of the name of happiness. I know as well as you do, that there is a kind of happiness in sin; I know as well as you do, that without a sense of forgiveness there is a kind of pleasure a man or woman may enjoy; but do you call that happiness? I do not. Do you call that insect happy, that in ever-lessening circles goes round and round the candle, till it plunge and perish in the flame? I have read of children that with merry glee, and light feet, and buoyant laughter, chased each other upon the sinking deck, when brave men had stripped to swim, and cowards lay down to die. Call ye them happy? Happy! "I said of laughter, It is madness; and of mirth, What doeth it?" But the blessedness told of in our text, that never fades. (*S. Guthrie, D.D.*) *A song of a saved soul.*—I. HERE IS A MAN PAINTING A PICTURE OF THE EVIL WHICH HAD BEEN HIS CURSE. When a man has been rescued from hell, he speaks in no mincing fashion of its horrors. 1. "Transgression" signifies departure, the dissolving of a union, apostasy. 2. "Sin" means literally an error, missing an aim. Not only had he rebelled against God, but he had fatally missed the mark to which his whole effort and energy should have been directed. "A man never gets what he hoped for by doing wrong; or, if he seems to do so, he gets something more that spoils it all. He pursues after the fleeing form that seems so fair, and, when he reaches her side and lifts her veil, eager to embrace the temptress, a hideous skeleton grins and gibbers at him." 3. "Iniquity," literally, is something twisted or distorted—warped from the straight line of right. All sin is a turning aside, a going out of the way, an entrance on by-paths which can never be safe. II. HERE IS A MAN POINTING OUT THE WRETCHEDNESS WHICH HIS SIN AND SILENCE CONCERNING IT HAD ENTAILED UPON HIM (vers. 3, 4). A weird picture, a realistic illustration of the misery of unrepentant remorse. "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and what a finding out it is! The sinner expected to conjure up flowers: he has conjured up serpents; he expected thrills of pleasure: he has felt shocks of pain; he expected to find peace: he has let slip the dogs of war; he hoped to find liberty: he has drawn a heavy chain about his life. 1. Sin always means misery. It is like the poison-tree in travellers' stories: tempting weary men to rest beneath its thick foliage, and insinuating death into the limbs that relax in the fatal coolness of its shade. It is like the apples of Sodom: fair to look upon, but turning to acrid ashes on the unwary lips. 2. Sin of itself is bad enough, but sin unconfessed is hell on earth. Better confess the deed than allow it to darken your soul's windows, harden your heart, and spread its contagion throughout your being. III. HERE IS A MAN REVEALING THE PATH



WHICH LED TO THE THRONE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS (ver. 5). Thank Heaven that there is such a path, and that it is accessible to every sin-damaged life. That path has been provided by a loving God; it is the path of repentance, the King's highway. Have we trodden that path? Have we responded to the summons of God's Nathan, as he has poured the light divine upon our eyes? IV. HERE IS A MAN PROCLAIMING THE MASTERY AND REMOVAL OF HIS SIN BY GOD'S GREAT GRACE (vers. 1, 2). The three words he employs are delightfully expressive. 1. "Forgiveness" means literally the bearing away of a load. Sin is like the burden on the pilgrim's back in the Immortal Allegory. It crushes the soul, weakens the life, pampers the spirit. But the grace of God causes the burden to fall from the soul, emancipates it from the crushing load. 2. "Covered" means the interment of the evil thing. It is a nuisance, an annoyance, an eyesore, a foul, disgusting thing. So God digs a grave for it, and buries it out of sight. 3. "Not to impute" means that our wickedness is no longer chargeable to us. God will be silent concerning it. The account is settled V. HERE IS A MAN EXULTING IN THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH HIS FORGIVENESS HAD SECURED TO HIM. "O the blessedness of the saved one," he shouts. The words are a burst of thankful rapture. His very soul dances for joy; and no wonder: the change in himself was so very real, the transition so marvellous. It was a passage from death unto life, from winter to summer, from darkness to light, from hell to heaven; the gnawings of conscience exchanged for the peace of God, his sullen silence giving place to spontaneous, irrepressible and hearty song, his very self becoming rejuvenated. Surely, such a change must mean blessedness! (*Joseph Pearce.*) *The pardon of sin*.—I. THE NATURE OF PARDON. 1. The being and inherency of sin is not taken away. Though not imputed, yet it is inherent in us. Remission and sanctification are distinct acts, and wrought in a distinct manner. 2. The nature of sin is not taken away. It is not a change of the native malice of the sin, but a non-imputation of it to the offender. 3. The demerit of sin is not taken away. Pardon frees us from actual condemnation, but not, as considered in our own persons, from the desert of condemnation. 4. The guilt of sin, or obligation to punishment, is taken away by pardon. II. THE AUTHOR OF PARDON—GOD. 1. It is His act. 'Tis an offended God who is a forgiving God; that God whose name thou hast profaned, whose patience thou hast abused, whose laws thou hast violated, whose mercy thou hast slighted, whose justice thou hast dared, and whose glory thou hast stained. 2. He only can do it. Forgiveness belongs to God as—(1) Proprietor. He has a greater right to us than we have to ourselves. (2) Sovereign. He is Lord over us, as we are His creatures. (3) Governor of us, as we are parts of the world. 3. It is an act of His mercy. Not our merit. Though there be a conditional connection between pardon and repentance and faith, yet there is no meritorious connection ariseth from the nature of those graces, but remission flows from the gracious indulgence of the promise. 4. It is the act of His justice. There is a composition of Judge and Father in this act: free grace on God's part, but justice upon the account of Christ. 5. It is the act of His power. It is a greater work to forgive, than to prevent the commission of sin; as it is a greater work to raise a dead man than to cure a sick man: one is a work of art, the other belongs only to Omnipotence. III. THE MANNER OF IT. 1. On God's part, by Christ. (1) By His death. (2) By His resurrection. 2. On our part, by faith. This is as necessary in an instrumental way, as Christ in a meritorious way (Acts xxvi. 18). 3. This forgiveness shows—(1) God's willingness to pardon. (2) The certainty of forgiveness. (3) The extent of it (John i. 29). (4) The continuance of it. (5) The worth of it (Acts xx. 28). IV. EXTENSIVENESS, FULLNESS, OR PERFECTNESS OF PARDON. 1. Perfect in respect of state. God retains no hatred against a pardoned person. He never imputes sin formally, because he no more remembers it, though virtually he may, to aggravate the offence a believer hath fallen into after his justification. So Job possessed the sins of his youth. And Christ tacitly put Peter in remembrance of his denial of Him. The grant is complete here, though all the fruits of remission are not enjoyed till the day of judgment, and therefore in Scripture sin is said then to be forgiven. 'Tis a question whether believers' sins will be mentioned at the day of judgment. 2. In respect of the objects. Sinful nature, sinful habits, sinful dispositions, pardoned at once, though never so heinous for quality or quantity. 3. In respect of duration (Col. ii. 14, 15). V. THE EFFECT OF PARDON. 1. The greatest evil is taken away, and the dreadful consequences of it. 2. The greatest blessings are conferred. (1) The favour of God. (2) Access to

God. (3) Peace of conscience. (4) It sweetens all mercies. (5) It sweetens all afflictions. *Uses*—1. An unpardoned man is a miserable man. (1) There must either be pardon or punishment. (2) You can call nothing an act of God's love towards you, while you remain unpardoned. (3) All the time thou livest unpardoned, thy debts mount the higher. (4) It is that God who would have pardoned thee if thou wouldst have accepted of it, who will condemn thee if thou dost utterly refuse it. 2. Pardon of sin may make thee hope for all other blessings. (1) If once pardoned, thou wilt be always pardoned. (2) Thou art above the reach of all accusations. (3) There will be a solemn justification of thee at the last day. (4) Faith doth interest us in this, though it be weak. 3. Consider whether your sins are pardoned. The true signs are—(1) Sincerity in our walk. (2) Mourning for sin. (3) Fearfulness of sin. (4) Sanctification. (5) Forgiving others. (6) Affectionate love to God and Christ. (*S. Charnock, B.D.*) *The blessedness of forgiveness*:—I. IT DRIVES AWAY ALL MISERY. 1. The wrath of God. 2. The curse of the law. 3. An accusing conscience. 4. The fear of death. 5. The awfulness of eternity. II. IT BRINGS IN ALL JOYS. 1. Filial contemplation of God. 2. Happy communion with God. 3. Bright views of Providence. 4. Alleviation in sickness. 5. Comfort in death. 6. Acquittal at the judgment bar. 7. Glory throughout eternity. (*H. Law, M.A.*) *Pardon of sin the only true means to happiness*:—We must every one herein place our happiness, even in God's pardoning sin, and accordingly set our hearts and affections upon it, longing after this assurance above all things in the world. If a malefactor were condemned, and at the place of execution, what is it that would make him happy? What wiseth he above the world? only a pardon from his Prince: gold and silver, lands and honours, can do him no good; only a pardon is the most welcome thing in the world. This is every man's case—we are traitors and rebels to God, our sins have proclaimed us rebels through heaven and earth, the law hath condemned us, we are going on to execution, and every day nearer than other, wherein then ought we to place our happiness, if we well weighed our estate, but in a gracious and free pardon? We would strive for pardon as for life and death. Miserable men they be, that place their felicity in anything else. For consider, that notwithstanding—1. The greatest part of men place their happiness in wealth, pleasure, honour; and these carry all their hearts: yet—(1) This is an earthly and sensual, and far from Christian happiness, which cannot leave a man unhappy in the end, as all these do. (2) The most wicked ones that the world hath had have enjoyed the greatest outward prosperity. (3) The most dear servants of God have been strangers in the world, and met with the strangest entertainment. (4) Those whose portion hath been outwardly most prosperous, yet never thought themselves happy out of God's mercy pardoning sin. An example in David: he had riches, honour, pleasure, a crown, kingdom, subjects, treasures, but did he place his felicity in these things? No, but in the forgiveness and covering of sins; in whose steps we must tread. (5) He that would build a firm house, must lay a sure foundation, and wilt thou lay the foundation of thy happiness in the dust? Lay it in wealth, they have wings; and when they fly away, so doth thy happiness: why dost thou trust a fugitive servant? Lay it in pleasures, it will end in sorrow; and the apostle faith, it makes a man as corpse living, dead while he liveth. Lay it in honour, what a vanishing thing is that, like the footsteps of a ship in the sea, carried with a strong gale? Yea, lay it anywhere but in God and His assured mercies, it will prove a tottering happiness, and the fall of such a happy man shall be great. 2. Others think themselves most happy in the committing of sin, and practice of their iniquity; and these are most miserable captives to the devil, so far from thinking their happiness to stand in the pardon of sin, as that they place it in the practice of it. Hence it is that monsters of men, devils incarnate, profess to swear, quarrel, drink, riot, and take them the greatest enemies to their happiness, that would help to pull them out of the snares of the devil. I would know what other happiness the devil hath, than incessantly to sin against God, and draw so many as he can into his own damnation; which express image he hath stamped on numbers, marked to destruction. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *The not imputing of sin*:—The Lord imputes not, that is, the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, suffers not me to impute to myself those sins, which I have truly repented. The over-tenderness of a bruised and a faint conscience may impute sin to itself when it is discharged, and a seared and obdurate conscience may impute none when it abounds; if the Holy Ghost work, he rectifies

both; and if God do inflict punishments after our repentance and the souls of our reconciliation, yet He suffers us not to impute those sins to ourselves, or to repute those corrections, punishments, as though He had not forgiven them, or as though He came to an execution after a pardon, but that they are laid upon us medicinally, and by way of prevention, and precaution against his future displeasure. This is that peace of conscience, when there is not one sword drawn: this is that meridional brightness of the conscience, when there is not one cloud in our sky. I shall not hope that original sin shall not be imputed, but fear that actual sin may; not hope that my dumb sins shall not, but my crying sins may; not hope that my apparent sins, which have therefore induced in me a particular sense of them, shall not, but my secret sins, sins that I am not able to return and represent to mine own memory, may: for this "*non imputabit*" hath no limitation; God shall suffer the conscience thus rectified to terrify itself with nothing. (*John Donne, D.D.*)

**Ver. 2. In whose spirit there is no guile.**—*Signs of a sincere and guileless heart.*—1. Observe thy actions. (1) In their nature. If they be single and pure, so is thy heart. As is the fountain and the root, such are the streams and the fruit. (2) In their end. An honest heart ever aims at God's glory directly, whereas a guileful heart ever propounds bad ends of good actions. 2. Observe whether thou makest conscience secretly of all sins; yea, most seriously of those to which thou art most inclined. 3. Consider whether thou daily renewest thy purpose of not sinning against God, as thou renewest thy days, and whether thou watchest over thine own heart with an holy suspicion, and wilt for God's will break thine own. 4. Mark whether thou lovest God in His image, ordinances, and children, even then when the world scorns and hates all these. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Motives to guilelessness.*—1. God's commandment (Gen. xvii. 1; Ps. li. 6). Conformity of manners must go with reformation of the heart. 2. It is a part of God's image, who is most single and true; and the beauty of the Church is to be all glorious within: herein she is conformable to her Head, in whose mouth was found no guile. Every son of the Church must be a Nathaniel, in whom is no guile (John i. 47), and a true Israelite, even pure of heart (Ps. lxxiii. 1). 3. Our text affords a sound reason, in that sincerity of heart is joined with forgiveness of sins, and is a forerunner to blessedness. Sincerity is a veil to cover all sin; because of this, God covers and cures all our iniquities (1 Kings xv. 14). 4. If we would be distinguished from hypocrites, we must labour for sincerity; wicked ones may outwardly strain beyond us, make fair shows, and have a kind of faith and joy, etc., but we must outstrip them all in sincerity of heart. 5. If we would have our duties comfortable to ourselves and profitable, when men object them unto us, and we meet with but small comfort in the world because of them, let us labour to become true Israelites (2 Sam. vi. 20–22). 6. God hath appointed a day to try thy heart and the soundness thereof, to turn out all the windings of it; and He abhors the double heart, that turns itself upon deceitfulness as a door upon hinges; therefore look to the singleness of it beforehand. 7. Only they that walk uprightly are citizens of heaven (Ps. xv. 2). (*Ibid.*) *Guile forsaken when guilt is forgiven.*—I. **MANY MEN PLAY TRICKS WITH GOD AND THEIR CONSCIENCES.** 1. The guile of the human heart shows itself in a refusal to come to serious consideration. The most frivolous amusements, the most carking cares, and even the most weary ceremonials of fashions, are adopted as a happy release from the labour of reflection. Death, judgment, eternity, heaven, and hell—they dare not think of these: and why? Because they know that all is wrong with them, and so they practise a crafty carelessness and a cunning indifference. 2. Others who do think a little are partial in their judgments of themselves. They present accounts, but these are cooked and made to appear other than they should by a sort of spiritual financing. 3. Many are evidently tricking themselves wilfully because they rest on such frivolous grounds of confidence. Could any man depend on his own good works unless he had juggled with his judgment? 4. Others avoid all home truths, and keep clear of searching doctrines. The preacher is too censorious, and that is your excuse for remaining in spiritual apathy. Even books come in for like censures. The plain-speaking volume is not "conceived in a gentle spirit," or is too narrow, bigoted, and one-sided. 5. Many are clever at parrying home thrusts by introducing other themes. You know how the lapwing pretends to have a broken wing, and flies as if it must be taken and all with the view of leading the passenger from her nest, so

do our hearers try to lead us away from the main matter. 6. Another very cunning trick which is often practised by sinners who are full of guile is this, they pass on to other people anything which is uncomfortably applicable to themselves. It seemed as if the preacher had made a cap specially to fit that head, but the result was that the person who watched the making exclaimed, "Dear me! How well he has taken my neighbour's measure." 7. One sorry piece of craft which Satan teaches to many is to make them doubt, or pretend to doubt, anything in Scripture which frowns upon them. 8. While yet far from God, many calm and quiet themselves with outward religion. 9. There are others who conceal in the secret of their hearts a blasphemous notion which they hardly dare to put into words, but it amounts to this that the reason why they are not saved is not by any means due to themselves. 10. Perhaps the most numerous victims of this guile are those who flatter themselves that they will come right some day. If you resolve that you will repent in a year's time, what is that but a daring defiance of God by declaring that you will continue in sin for twelve months at least? Have you ever looked at it in that light? II. THE PARDONED MAN GIVES EVIDENCE OF CEASING FROM THIS GUILT. 1. He makes an open confession of his sin to God. 2. He has done with all sorts of excuses and palliations. 3. Sincerity has entered into his belief in the terrible things of God's Word. He now sees their certainty and their justice. 4. He now wishes to be dealt with personally and impartially whenever he reads a book or hears a sermon. 5. He desires in everything that he does to be true. 6. He also desires to be rid of all sin. 7. He seeks after perfect purity of life, and he has heartily ceased from guile, for now as an heir of heaven he lives in the presence of God, and delights to remember the all-seeing eye. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 8, 4. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.—*Unconfessed sin*:—On several grounds we may set forth the urgency of the duty of making immediate and penitent confession of our sins unto God. I. EVERY SIN IS MANIFEST UNTO GOD WHETHER WE CONFESS IT OR NOT. His scrutiny penetrates every disguise, and analyzes every motive. Every sin is not only naked unto God's eye, but it is clearer unto Him than any confession of ours could make it. He sees its growth. "He understandeth the thought afar off." All the aggravations of every sin are clearer unto the eye of God than any confession of ours could state them. Those that are brought to a sense of their sins are often filled with amazement when they think of the forbearance of God towards them in their state of guilt. Should not they that are God's children, and have been enlightened in their understanding, chasten themselves before God because of their transgressions that they may walk in the light of His countenance? If it be true that unacknowledged sin separates the soul from God, that the regarding of iniquity in the heart makes prayer useless, and sacrifices an abomination, that the look of lust and the motion of causeless anger against a brother provoke God's anger, an immediate and humble confession of sin from the heart unto God is both necessary and safe. Unto them who keep silence God gives sorrow. He maketh their bones to rot. II. NO SIN IS DIMINISHED BY DEFERRING THE CONFESSION OF IT. If murder or malice or falsehood or any transgression be a crime because it is a violation of God's holy law, the mere lapse of time does not alter the fact that the law was violated. If one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, God's view of sin will not be otherwise a thousand years hence than it is on the day that the sin is committed. God judges according to the principles from which an action springs, and His judgment cannot be nullified by lapse of time. Is sin represented as a burden on the conscience? The bearing of a burden is not alleviated by lapse of time, but rather becomes more oppressive. Some hearts seem callous, but even they get no actual relief from their burden of guilt by deferring confession of their sins unto God. They are treasuring up wrath unto themselves against the day of wrath. Is sin represented as pollution which makes us hateful unto God? Pollution does not liquify and evaporate, but extends and deepens. "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived." The canker of corruption increases to more ungodliness. Is sin represented as a debt? Deferring to pay never diminishes the extent of the indebtedness. In the natural world those substances that cannot resist destroying agents become weaker and weaker. Wood rots; iron rusts; and stones crumble. Lapse of time never makes good that loss of substance, nor does it even arrest the loss. III. SIN UNCONFESSED CORRODES THE HEART. There is an inner unrest.

One who suppresses confession unto God nevertheless roars all the day long. Whoso will not pour out his corruptions before God tortures his own soul, wears himself out, and makes himself old before his time. "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." The corroding effect of unconfessed sin arises from the necessity which is laid on the heart to reconcile itself to its condition. The sin must be explained in some way that will quiet the conscience. Not a few screen themselves behind those that act for them. Because an agent procures and pays a dividend, the investor thinks himself exonerated from all blame that may attach to the methods and means, by which a Limited Liability Company gets prosperity for its shareholders. David gave his command to Joab, and Joab doubtless acted through not a few subordinate officers, before Uriah could be set in "the forefront of the hottest battle," and deserted at the critical moment, and it was really the sword of Ammon that shed the brave man's blood; but God joined David immediately with Uriah's death. It was David who was made to cry, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God." "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Sometimes men extract a balm from the general course of God's providence. 'Twas a soothing sophism unto David, "The sword devoureth one as well as another." By many such shifts do men remove themselves from the actual sin which has gratified or profited them. But their heart suffers. Tolerating sin, it soon becomes insensible to the heinousness of sin and foregoes its own brotherhood. In many other ways also unconfessed sin corrodes the heart. It betrays us to other forms of sin, even as one virtue leads to another. Craft uses deceit. Violence seeks justification or concealment in lies. Sensuality loosens every fibre of virtue, and paves the way to every relative vice. Were the sin confessed, the heart would be renewed. Unconfessed sin indisposes us for duty. "Sinful heart makes feeble hand." Duty is enforced by conscience, but when the conscience itself lies in a comatose state, because of the diffused poison of an unconfessed sin, its authority is paralyzed. Through confession of sin, a sinner is purged from an evil conscience to serve the Living God. Unconfessed sin makes all our services unacceptable unto God. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar," etc. If service be unacceptable when a brother hath ought against us, much more must it seem vile when God Himself hath something against us! Unconfessed sin exerts an exasperating influence on the heart. There is a state of mind in which a man regards all things as out of joint. It sets him at variance with himself and his surroundings, and fills him with idle longings for change of scene. God's hand lies heavy on him day and night, and makes duty burdensome. The want of inward peace deprives him of that element which sweetens life's sorrows and smooths its roughness. Instead of the well-spring of joy, with which a good conscience cheers the mind, there is gloom and unrest and a dread of ill. How can a man with an evil conscience put his trust in the living God, and if he trust not in the living God, how can he be happy, or feel secure? "The light that is in him is darkness." (*H. Drysdale.*) *Why men are unwilling to confess their sin.*—1. Because the devil stupefies and benumbs the soul, that it has little or no feeling of its sin; and then it lies, as it were, concealed in the soul; which makes it either thoughtless about it, or careless to acknowledge it. 2. Because the custom of sin takes away the sense of it; for, the longer any poisonous liquor stands in a vessel, so much the harder will it be to get it cleansed, and the poisonous quality eradicated. 3. Sometimes the soul has so great a sense of his sins, and is so apprehensive of the number and deformity of them, that it becomes thereby either ashamed or afraid to confess them to the Lord. 4. Satan sometimes prevails so far upon the soul as to persuade it that it can hide its sins by an act of oblivion of its own making; that is, he makes men foolishly flatter themselves that God will never remember those sins which they forget; and that what they themselves bury in silence shall be concealed from His all-seeing eyes. But see what God says to such as these (Ps. l. 20, 21). (*J. Hayward, D.D.*) *Confession and pardon*:—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven;" not, Blessed is that man who lives in a four-storey house; not, Blessed is that man who has a hundred thousand dollars to his credit in bank; not, Blessed is the man that owns the most railroad stock and government bonds. If you want to be happy, you must obtain the favour of God. And the way to obtain it is to seek God's pardon. David declares that happy is the man who is pardoned, and "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." My relations to God are determined by my loyalty to Him. In the sight of God you are a transparent man. He can see through you. I have a contempt for a man who has anything in him to hide.

I believe in having no wrong side and no right side to a character. It should be all right. I like that. But poor old human nature is so made up that no man knows everything. Some will say in their hearts, "If our pastor knew these things about me, what would he say?" Oh, listen; God hath already found it out. Be what you are through and through. Some pieces of humanity are put up like some bales of cotton down South. They put the nice, white cotton outside, and in the centre they put the dog-tail cotton—the worst cotton there is. And some humanity is put up on the same principle exactly. Dealers have got a method of finding out what a bale of cotton is right through. And some of these days God will show you what you are through and through. David tells us that he sinned against God, and kept silence, and would not confess; and that by reason of his refusal to confess his sins, "day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him, and his moisture was turned into the drought of summer." Oh, what striking figures he uses here! Listen to me now, you who have not had peace of mind for months. Days seem years when your mind is on yourself, because you are miserable. David told what his trouble was, what your trouble is; and he said because of it, "My moisture was turned into the drought of summer." I have learned how a person feels by seeing how the fields are in a droughty season. Our garden is dried up, and every green thing droops, and the best land produces only about ten per cent. of a crop. A drought of this kind may only last for weeks, but a drought in the human heart may be one that will last for ever. "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Oh, to see the drought of summer upon the hearts and lives of professing Christians, and upon those out of the Church, and to see their spiritual nature droop, and wither, and die under a drought that is brought upon them by their own voluntary conduct and action! Where is there a man that won't confess? We come to him to-night asking him to seek the Lord, and he says, "I don't want to come up." What he means is, "I don't want to confess"; that is the trouble. When a fellow gets willing to confess he will go and do it before anything else. The Lord says, "He that confesseth shall find mercy." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Sin is a debt: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Now, as sin is a debt, the best thing to do in the world is—don't sin at all. That is best, and thank God it is possible. "Yes," you say, "but I can't help sinning." You can help it just as well as you can keep from getting into debt? Am I obliged to get into debt to-day or to-morrow? Which sin am I obliged to commit to-day or to-morrow? "You are not like me," you hear people say; "I cannot live without sin." Whenever you hear a person say that, you may know he is falling into sin more deeply, and that he has made provision for it. Well, I say, the best thing in the world is, don't do wrong. But if you do happen to slip and do wrong the best thing is to fall down and repent. Don't let it get cold before you have repented of it. A man ought to be able to repent and to pray anywhere that he can afford to sin. Sin is a debt you have to meet at the mercy-seat of God with an honest, open confession, or you will have to meet it in the judgment with eternal bankruptcy of your soul. Now, which will you do? If you have sinned, the best time for you to repent is now. You cannot afford to put it off any longer. (S. P. Jones.) *Repentance the way to happiness*.—I. THE SILENCE WHICH HE KEPT. Its criminality is clear from the circumstances by which it has been occasioned, and from the perseverance with which it has been maintained against the mercy and the power of God. Your silence has been occasioned by—1. Thoughtlessness and indifference. 2. Pride and enmity of heart against God. 3. Procrastination; notwithstanding the variety of His appeals. II. THE MISERY WHICH HE ENDURED. What misery is occasioned by sin when—1. It has to contend with keen and deep convictions. 2. It is accompanied by the dread of discovery. 3. The hatred to God which it produces in the heart is connected with a dread of His almighty power. 4. All these internal feelings are accompanied with eternal adversity and tribulation. 5. The sinner looks forward to the future and anticipates that eternity to which every moment brings him nearer. III. THE CONFESSION WHICH HE MADE. 1. It was minute and unreserved. 2. He confessed that his sin was ever present to his mind. 3. He confessed that his sin admitted of no apology or extenuation. 4. He confessed that his sins exposed him to the Divine rejection. 5. He confessed that his sin was a source of deep distress to his mind. 6. His confession was accompanied with prayer. IV. THE PARDON WHICH HE RECEIVED. 1. The

source whence it was derived. 2. The promptness with which it was bestowed. 3. The gratuitousness with which it was granted. 4. The encouragement which it is calculated to afford to those who, like himself, have broken their impenitent silence, and begun to confess their transgressions to the Lord (ver. 0). 5. The blessedness of which it was productive. (1) Pardon blessed his condition, saving from depravity as well as from condemnation. (2) Pardon blessed his feelings, making him happy as well as safe and holy. Happy in his affections. Happy in the privilege of communion with God. Happy in the performance of holy duties. Happy in anticipation of the future. (*J. Alexander.*) *Terrible convictions and gentle drawings*.—David here describes a very common experience amongst convinced sinners. He was subjected to extreme terrors and pangs of conscience. The terrors he experienced were indescribable, filling his soul with horror and dismay. We would speak—I. To **THE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S REBUKE AND THE TERRORS OF GOD'S LAW**. What are the causes of your terror? I shall borrow my divisions from quaint old Thomas Fuller, and, as I cannot say better things than he said, I shall borrow much. 1. Those wounds must be deep which are given by so strong a hand as that of God. Remember it is God that is dealing with you, the almighty God. Do you wonder, then, that when He smites, His blows fell you to the ground. Be not astonished at your terrors. 2. Then think of the place where God has wounded you. Not in hand, head, or foot, but in your heart, your inmost soul. 3. Satan is busy with you. "Now," saith he, "God is driving him to madness, I will drive him to despair." 4. The terrible nature of the weapon with which God has wounded you. The sword of the Spirit, so that it cannot be a little wound. 5. The foolishness of the patient. Some are much more quickly healed than others; serenity of mind and quietude of spirit help much, but fretfulness and anxiety hinder. It is even so with you: you are a foolish patient; you will not do that which would cure you, but you do that which aggravates your woe: you know that if you would cast yourselves upon Jesus you would have peace of conscience at once; but instead of that you are meddling with doctrines too high for you, trying to pry into mysteries which the angels have not known, and so you turn your dizzy brain, and thus help to make your heart yet more singularly sad. You seek to file your fetters, and you rivet them; you seek to unbind them yourself, and you thrust them the deeper into your flesh. 6. Yours is a disease in which nothing can ever help you but that one remedy. All the joys of nature will never give you relief. When Adam had sinned he became suddenly plunged in misery; he had unparadised paradise. And so it will be with you. If you could be put in paradise you would not be happier. There is only one cure for you. 7. Now why does God let you suffer so? He does not deal so with all His people. Why, then, with you? We cannot tell all the reasons, but it may be because you were such a stony-hearted sinner. You were so desperately set on mischief, so stolid, so indifferent, that, if saved, God must save you in such a way, or else not at all. 8. And there is that in your heart which would take you back to your old sins, and so He is making them bitter to you. He is burning you that you may be like the burnt child which dreads the fire. 9. And He would make you the more happy afterwards. The black days of dreary winter make the summer days all the fairer and the sweeter. 10. And, maybe, God means to make great use of you. The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. These are His highlanders that carry everything before them. They know the rivers of sin, the glens of grief, and, now their sins are washed away, they know the heights of self-consecration, and of pure devotion. They can do all things through and for the Christ who has forgiven them. II. To **THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER FELT THESE TERRORS BUT STRANGELY WISH THEY HAD**. It is not true that all who are saved suffer these terrors. The most, and they amongst the best, do not. And God has brought you in quieter ways to Himself—then be grateful to Him. You might not have been able to bear other means. And perhaps if you had much experience you would have grown self-righteous. There is a brother who has never known, to the extent some of us have to know, the plague of his own heart. He has never gone through fire and through water, but, on the contrary, is a loving-hearted spirit: a man who spends and is spent in his Master's service; he knows more of the heights of communion than some of us. Do not, then, desire to be troubled, but trust to Christ. (*G. H. Spurgeon.*) *The exercises of a soul seeking pardon*.—These verses give us the experience of a soul convinced of sin, and aware of the value and blessedness of pardon, without

us yet possessing the power to assume that pardon as its own. I. THE INDIVIDUAL IS FIRST EXHIBITED TO US IN SILENT MEDITATION OR SELF-EXAMINATION. 1. This is a most necessary but painful duty (Ps. iv. 4; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Ps. lxxvii. 6). 2. It has for its subject the nature and amount of sin. The rule by which that sin is measured is readily supplied by the Holy Spirit, from all the works and dispensations of God. II. This self-examination was supposed to be carried on in silence; but the sentence closes with a seeming contradiction, saying that HIS BONES WAXED OLD WITH HIS CONTINUAL ROARING. The work of self-examination may go on in silence and in secrecy; men without hear nothing of the sorrow, see nothing of the distress and agony within—"The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." But God looks upon the sorrow within; God beholds the workings of this troubled conscience, its throes of grief, and hears its moans. III. CONSCIOUS IMPOTENCE ARRIVED AT LAST. "My bones waxed old," etc. Here it is not requisite to bring in the machinery of outward trial and experiment to convince the believer of his weakness; let him alone; let him lie there, while varied forms of evil pass over the thoroughfare of his memory or imagination, and while he detects the tendency of his affections to these forms, and battles hard, too, to turn it to good, and fails, the experiment is repeated, till he sinks under the shameful conviction, the sickening one, that he can do no good thing; hold his heart right, no, not one moment, with God; think no one good thought alone. And then he is in utter weakness cast on Divine compassion. And then impotent for ever? No, not for ever; impotent in self, but mighty through Christ (2 Cor. xii. 9). IV. THE STUBBORNNESS OF THE NATURE DEALT WITH. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." Converted men, without a failure, may be passed or hurried on from trial to trial externally, in order to bring out and mature that faith which eventuates in holiness. Thus with Joseph; what a series, what a sea of calamities had he to wade through; after the treachery of his brethren; what repeated trials and temptations had he to encounter, without an instant's breathing time, till he is placed in full peace upon the government of Egypt. This was heavy work upon the soul. Not temptation, merely, but distresses likewise; these, under a Divine Providence, sift and humble the soul, fix and form the faith, ere they flee before the sunshine of spiritual prosperity. V. THE SOUL NOW IN ITS DISTRESS MOURNS OVER DEPARTED PROSPERITY. "Moisture"—the word is figurative, but most significant. He was as a tree planted by the rivers of water, his fruit rich and ripe, his leaf fresh and verdant; all are now withered, and blasted, and scorched; what misery! VI. CAN ALL THIS ESCAPE THE COGNIZANCE OF THE FALLEN BELIEVER? No; he must hear it, and see it, and heed it, and repent. Aye, repent, not perish. God is still gracious, and though this subsequent repentance may be doubly bitter, yet through it he shall pass once more to peace. (*C. M. Fleury, M.A.*) *The danger of unconfessed sin*:—Grief kept within grows more and more intense. A festering wound is dangerous. Let thy soul flow forth in words as to thy common griefs, it is well for thee. And as to such as are spiritual the same rule applies. What a mercy that we have the Book of Psalms and the life of such a man as David. Biographies of most people are like the portraits of a past generation, when the art of flattery in oils was at its height. There is no greater cheat than a modern biography. We have no biographers now-a-days. David's psalms are his best memorial. There you have not the man's exterior, but his inward soul. You see the man's heart. There is no man who has known the Lord in any age since David but has seen himself in David's psalms as in a looking-glass, and has said to himself, "This man knows all about me." David is one who "seems to be, not one, but all mankind's epitome." Be thankful that David was permitted to try the experiment of silence after his great sin, for he will now tell us what came of it—"When I kept silence," etc. I. LET US THINK OF THE CHILD OF GOD thus acting. Children of God sin, for they are still in the body. But when he sins the proper thing for him to do is at once to go and confess it to God. Sin will not come to any great head in any man's heart who does this continually. But sometimes they will not do this, especially when they have done very wrong. When confession is most needed it is often least forthcoming. It was so in David's case. How fully had he fallen! It is no good to try and excuse David's sin. He himself would protest against our attempting it. But why did he not confess it? 1. The sin prevented the confession—blinded the eye, stultified the conscience, and stupefied his entire spiritual nature. What wretched prayers and praises were those he offered while the foul sin was



hidden in his bosom. Why was he silent when he knew he was wrong? Why did he not go to God at once? He was stupefied by his sin, fascinated, captivated, held in bondage by it. Beware of the basilisk eye of sin. It is dangerous even to look at, for looking leads to longing. No man ever thinks of sin without damage. I saw a magnificent photograph in Rome, one of the finest I had ever seen, and right across the middle there was the spectre mark of a cart and ten oxen, repeated many times. The artist had tried to get it out, but the trace remained. While his plate was exposed to take the view, the cart and the oxen had gone across the scene, and they were indelible. Upon our soul every sinful thought leaves a mark and a stain that calls for us to weep it out—nay, needs Christ's blood to wash it out. We begin with thinking of sin, and then we somewhat desire the sin: next we enter into communion with the sin, and then we get into the sin, and the sin gets into us, and we lie asoak in it. So David did. He did not feel it at first, but then he was plunged into the evil deeps. A man with a pail of water on his head feels it to be heavy, but if he dives he does not feel the weight of water above him because he is actually in it and surrounded by it. So when a man plunges into sin he does not feel its weight. When he is out of the dreadful element, then he is burdened by it. Thus at first David did not feel his sin. 2. Next, there was much pride in his heart. A child who has done wrong, and knows it, often will not own it. You cannot bring him to say, "I have done wrong." 3. Others have been silent because of fear. They could not believe that God would forgive them. They thought He would overwhelm them with His wrath. Do not think thus. Do not think that the Lord's mercy is clean gone for ever. Did He not love thee when thou wert dead in trespasses and sins, and will He not love us more if we turn to Him again? But now let us use this subject in reference—II. TO THE AWAKENED SINNER. There are such. But they are slow to make confession. They feel the burden, and will feel it more, but as yet they keep it to themselves. Remember John Bunyan's picture of the man in the iron cage. There is not in his whole book an incident more terrible. And many fall from despair into utter hardness of heart. They say "there is no hope," and they may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. Oh, when God makes your heart soft as wax, mind who puts the seal upon it. If the Spirit of God do not, there is another that will put the seal of despair, and perhaps of atheism and of defiant sin upon it, and then woe is that day that you were born. Refusal to confess is a perilous thing for the soul. If a man is awakened to a sense of sin, if he tarries long in that condition Satan is sure to entangle him. He cares little for careless sinners. He has them safe enough: and hypocrites, he knows, are going his way certainly; but the moment that souls are aroused he is in fear lest he lose them, so he plies all his craft to keep them. So that now is the time for the soul to close in with Christ. There is no comfort else to a bruised heart. If you are willing to confess everything He will help you, and there is good reason for doing it at once. For there is a mine of sin in every little sin. Like a spider's nest. Open it, and you will find thousands. So in every sin there is a host of sins. Go before God as the citizens of Calais came before the English king, with ropes about their necks. Then make your appeal, and assuredly God will forgive. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Silent grief injurious*:—A dry sorrow is a terrible one, but clear sunshine often follows the rain of tears. Tears are hopeful things; they are the dewdrops of the morning foretelling the coming day. . . . There is something in telling your sorrow and letting it out, otherwise it is like a mountain tarn which has no outlet, into which the rains descend and the torrents rush, and at last the banks are broken and a flood is caused. A festering wound is dangerous. Many have lost their reason because they had good reason to tell their sorrows, but had not reason enough to do so. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. *Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.*—*Premens gravissima*:—" *Premens gravissima. Sublevans suavissima et potentissima.*" So wrote one of our shrewdest commentators about the hand of which the psalmist speaks, in words which may be freely translated, "The hand of God, whilst pressing very hard, supports with utmost tenderness and almighty power." I. CREATION. How beautifully are the two sides illustrated here. The schoolboy can tell us how the atmosphere is weighing upon the slenderest object on the earth's surface with a constant pressure of many pounds to each square inch. The hand seen as " *premens gravissima.*" Yet the dewdrop is not shattered, nor the harebell bruised, since the same hand is also " *sublevans suavissima et potentissima.*"

Again, whilst with irresistible force all things are being dragged towards the earth's centre, the insect with its gauzy wings poises itself in the liquid air, and the tiny child is unhindered in his play. II. PROVIDENCE. Whatever page of history we study the same facts meet us,—on the one hand discipline and chastisement, disappointment, sorrow, pain, loss—the hand in ten thousand ways “premons gravissima”; on the other, the reaping of a compensating harvest of happy results, the hand “sublevans suavissima et potentissima.” Here tribulation and anguish, there prosperity and peace; nations and individuals groaning beneath the weight of calamity, then led out into a wealthy place. III. REDEMPTION. By redemption we mean the great process in all its parts by which the Father of Spirits is recovering man from spiritual ruin. Go back to the Fall. In the stern sentence passed on the first sinners, what do we see but the hand “premons”? in the primal promise what but the same hand “sublevans”? And in all that wonderful training, covering so many centuries and conducted in ways so surprising, by which the conscience of man was made alive to the guilt of sin—in all the work done by law—are we not looking at the hand of God as it descends upon the sinner, and makes him groan beneath the intolerable burden, as the psalmist did when “his bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long,” and “his moisture was turned into the drought of summer”? And does not that hand become more and more visible as “sublevans suavissima et potentissima,” as mercy streams across the midnight sky in an ever-brightening track of blessed light, prophetic of the full glory of the dawn? (*T. G. Rose.*)

*God's hand*:—I. ALL AFFLICTIONS ARE GOD'S HAND. 1. They are from God's hand purposing and ordaining them (Rom. viii. 29; 1 Thess. iii. 3). 2. They are from God's hand executing them (Isa. xlv. 7; Gen. xlv. 8; Job i. 21; 2 Sam. xvi. 11; Hos. vi. 1). 3. They are from God's hand ordering and disposing them. (1) In their causes, circumstances, kinds, manner, measure, and time of their beginning and ending. (2) In their ends and issues. His own glory, in manifesting His mercy, justice, wisdom, power, etc. The everlasting salvation of His children. He stops them in their course of sin, as with a hedge of thorns (Hos. ii. 6), that they should not break over into the pleasant pastures of sin, therein to be fatted to the slaughter. He brings them to a true hatred of sin, when they taste the bitter fruit of it. To the exercise of mortification, and desire of heaven and heavenly things: and thus they are judged of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. II. GOD LAYS HIS HAND HEAVILY OFTEN UPON HIS OWN DEAR CHILDREN. 1. There is deep corruption lurking in the best, who not seldom are cast upon so deep a sleep of security that they cannot be awakened with a little shaking, till by most grievous afflictions the Lord break their bones, consume their strength, and bring them into such grief and pain as sets them roaring. 2. Smaller troubles have often a smaller work. Small things cannot make great hearts stoop; a small fire will not purge away dross from gold, but it must be quick and piercing; a small wind doth not fan away the chaff of vanity, a small correction or smart makes the child more froward, till sounder correction subdue him; small trials do not so exercise faith, nor send men out of themselves to God: for as none for the scratch of a pin, or a little headache, will seek to the physician or surgeon; so a sinner in smaller grievances of the soul will scarce think he needs go to God (Job xxxiii. 14). 3. The greater the affliction is, the more odious doth sin appear to be unto God; a strong poison must have a strong antidote: the more the godly are stricken down for sin, the more are they stirred up to godly sorrow, to hatred of it, to zeal against it, the better and more watchful do they prevent sin to come, and look better to themselves: as a good physician oftentimes letteth blood, not to make a man sick, but to prevent sickness. 4. The greater the trial is, the better experience have they of themselves. 5. God's children have great afflictions, and are pressed with an heavy hand, that God Himself may be clearly seen to be their deliverer, when in the eyes of all flesh they are lost. 6. As great afflictions make way for abundant mercy from God to us, so also for abundant thanks from us to God. If one cure a trifling matter, it neither so binds the patient, nor yet commends the physician: but if any be cured of some deadly, and almost incurable disease, then we profess we could never have met with such a physician in all the world again, and we are accordingly thankful. 7. Were it not for great afflictions, we could never know the power of God's Word in quickening us, cheering and comforting us in them, that it is the Word of Life, is most evidently seen in Death itself. III. GOD LAYS HIS HEAVY HAND UPON HIS CHILDREN A LONG TIME, AND WITH MUCH CON-

**TIINUANCE.** 1. Sometimes God's children in their falls harden their hearts, and grow stiff in their sin, which was David's case here, and then the Lord hardeneth Himself to grow stiff in displeasure. Oftentimes God's children would sit silent, if the Lord would be as silent as they: but whom He loves, He will bring back the way that they are gone, and great hearts will not stoop for a little. 2. Christ hath not taken away the lingering of trials, but the malignity and poison of them; yea, Himself through all His life was a man full of sorrows; and we must not look to be better; He deserved them not, we have. 3. God would have us in the continuance of our trouble, to see the continuance of our sin; were our correction always short, we would not be persuaded of the greatness of our sins: plasters use to continue, and not fall off till the wound be cured; and if a right use of afflictions were attained once, a joyful issue would soon follow: but some lust is not denied, and that adds a sting unto them. 4. God by the continuance of His hand would hold us in a continual exercise of grace, as of humility, faith, patience, prayer, repentance, etc., it being with a godly man, as one that hath a precious jewel, which he is careful to keep in his band, so long as he watcheth, none can get it from him; but when he sleeps or slumbers, his band opens, and it falls out, any man may have it. By continual blowing, the fire is kept in, but it dies by discontinuance. (T. Taylor, D.D.)

**Ver. 5. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.**—*Confession*:—It is hard to look things in the face; yet we must do so; we must own our sins honestly. I. To OUR OWN HEARTS—and then, down comes our pride. We thought ourselves tolerably good, and that we could pass muster as well as most; but beginning to look, we detect, here first, and then there, a blemish, an infirmity, a gross sin. It is best to be frank, and rather to make the most than the least of our faults. The iron-founder examines the huge mass of some iron girder, on which he has spent much labour; he sees one tiny crack, but passes it by, hoping, though with strong misgiving, that the real strength of the metal will not be affected; and ere long he hears that the bridge has fallen, and men have been killed by it, and that the disaster is traced to a flaw in the metal. He had better have faced the disappointment, and have had the piece re-cast, than have been responsible for the accident. II. To OTHERS. When a man knows his own fault, he does not like others to know it: he would prefer to remain in their eyes the spotless man he once was in his own. It is a degrading thought that others should know that you have been guilty of a meanness, of intemperance, of passion, of untruthfulness; and yet by trying to conceal it from them, you may be adding deception to your former error. Not that we are bound to blaze abroad our faults; that might do more harm than good: but to cover them, or palliate them, so as to retain the good opinion of others, is fruitless and insincere. Bitter though it be to lose the good opinion of friends, still even that is better than disingenuousness. III. To GOD. It is God whom we have offended: to God must our confession be made. With abject sorrow, and unfeigned shame that we should in any, the least, point have outraged the majesty, the purity, the honour of God; with body, soul, and spirit all bowed down; with reason silent, with no excuses, no special pleading, no attempt to set off against our faults any good things which we have done; but simply engrossed in our hatred of the evil thing we have done, and unreservedly acknowledging its wickedness. IV. If you cannot quiet your conscience by secret confession to God, use THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. Something human the man craves, some human voice to tell him by his face that he is forgiven, to assure him, and to dispel doubts. (G. F. Prescott, M.A.) *Sin confessed and unconfessed*:—I. SIN UNCONFESSSED, WORKING MISERY IN THE SOUL. 1. This misery was corporeally emaciating. 2. This misery lasted as long as the silence. 3. This misery was felt to be from God. II. SIN CONFESSSED, DIVINELY REMOVED FROM THE SOUL. 1. The removal of sin from man is a possible act. 2. A blessed act. 3. An encouraging act. 4. A saving act. (1) It makes safe in the greatest dangers. (2) It secures the protection of God Himself. (3) It encircles the life with Divine music. (Homilet.) *Relief afforded by confession*:—I. THE PSALMIST HAD KEPT SILENCE. In this he was wrong. Sin had been committed, and the fruits were fermenting and fomenting in his bosom, gendering turmoil and breeding corruption. So sin will dwell in our souls, and we fuddle and turn it into a means of enjoyment. We have not the courage to look at these sins as sins, and to cast them out from what ought to be the

temple of the Lord. We try as far as possible not even to notice them. We prefer thinking of our supposed excellences, of the good deeds we have done, of our talents, courage, prowess, generosity, and roll these as a sweet morsel under our tongue. We decline thinking on the abuse made of the gifts bestowed on us,—on our ingratitude, ungodliness, our lusts cherished, our envy, our evil temper, our selfishness. There will be times, indeed, when these iniquities are forced upon our attention by the accusations of conscience or the reproaches of our fellow-men, or by the troubles into which they bring us. But on these occasions we put ourselves on the defensive and parry off the attack; and when these weapons of defence are wrested from us, then we bring excuses and urge palliations referring to extenuating circumstances, or pleading seductions, or pointing to the fairer side of the offence, to the pleasure it gave, or the kindness or frankness which characterized it. Under such pretexts as these we keep silence when we should speak out, when we should confess the sin and acknowledge the transgression, cast them out from our hearts and slay them before the Lord.

II. WHEN HE KEPT SILENCE HE WAS TROUBLED. God speaks. He speaks in the conscience, saying, this deed, this thought was evil. He speaks in the Word, saying, "The wages of sin is death." He speaks to us by His Spirit, striving to subdue the resistance. But the ear is stopped, that it may not hear; or when the voice is so loud that it cannot but be heard, no attention is paid to it, or it is openly disobeyed. There is now a terrible conflict. There is a voice commanding, but there is a determined effort to drown it, as loud and dismal as the sound of the gong which was used in Mexico to drown the cry of the tortured and bleeding human victims on the altar. What earnestness in the voice demanding, the voice entreating! but there is equal earnestness in the struggles resisting, and the hatred resenting. No wonder that "the moisture is turned into the drought of summer." The terrible heat, exceeding that of a tropical sun, burns up every living thing. The soul is left as an arid waste, without a scrap of vegetation.

III. THE PSALMIST CONFESSES HIS SINS. IV. THE PSALMIST HAD HIS SINS FORGIVEN. We are not to understand that the confession can merit the forgiveness. The confession can no more merit the forgiveness than the forgiveness can merit the confession. Both are gifts of God, and so bound together that you cannot have the one without the other. An old author represents Christ as coming to us with a gift in each hand. In the one hand He holds out forgiveness, free forgiveness; in the other hand He holds out repentance and confession. If we begin to say, "We are very willing to take the one of these; we know we have sinned, and are most anxious to have the forgiveness; but as to this wringing repentance and its proper fruit, a humbling confession, we wish to avoid them," then Christ will give us neither. But if in simple faith we will only take both, we shall receive both "without money and without price." At the same instant that we break silence and cry in faith for mercy, Heaven also breaks the awful silence, and the mercy is bestowed and received. And now the crowded bosom finds relief; the confined soul experiences enlargement; the fettered spirit is free; the prison doors are thrown open, and the soul walks at liberty and expatiates abroad, on before untrodden ground, and gazes on new and lovely scenes. New affections are called forth, and new-born feelings spring up. The evil humours have been let out, and the body feels health returning, and, with health, motive and activity. (*J. McCosh.*) *The forgiveness of sins*.—If you blot out of David's psalms his profound sense of moral evil in all its bare, black iniquity, as the great reality of man's experience and life, you blot out those psalms at the same time from the literature of the world: their work is done, their power is dead. But it is the firmness with which he grasps the hand which redeems from this evil, which gives him such a wonderful hold on the heart-strings of humanity. Slave, haggard, soldier, scholar, statesman, priest, all feel equally that he belongs to them, because his experience is so profoundly human; because man the sinner, God the Saviour, are the great themes of his meditation, and of his vivid, burning utterance to the world. Sin and salvation must be the main burden of every gospel which lays masterful hold on human hearts. There are two aspects of sin which need sometimes to be separately considered, that we may see the true method of its Divine treatment, and trace the principles on which it rests. I. ITS ESSENTIAL INIQUITY. The revelation of Scripture is that sin is a personal act against a person. It runs directly counter to our modern philosophizing on the subject. Man knows that he has sinned, himself has done it. "I have sinned, I have perverted that which is right." That "I"

means something which, whatever it may be, distinctly is not Nature and is not God (Ps. li. 4). The heart may be broken at beholding the ruin and anguish sin has wrought, but the core of the matter is not reached until its iniquity, the wrong before God, is seen to be the essence of it. Only when the sin is comprehended in all its evil, can God the Redeemer begin its cure. II. **ITS DISASTROUS FRUITS.** Here is a second gauge of the evil of sin—the utter misery which it works (Gen. iii. 24; iv. 1-15). Let a man be selfish, envious, lustful, grasping, in the most hidden imaginations of his heart, he can no more help being the author of sorrow to every one who has intimate relations with him, than a dung-hill can help breeding fever. It is a terrible subject, this inevitable fruit of sin. This is God's ordinance about sin—its fruit shall be misery. It is the grand hold which He keeps on sinners. Sin is in their power; misery is in His; and it is the hand by which He withholds them from swift perdition (1 Tim. i. 15; Rom. vii.; 1 John i. 6-10). The text casts a valuable light on the essential nature of forgiveness. God forgives the iniquity of the sin, while the mischief which it has wrought He sets Himself to repair. This is and must be slow and toilsome work. It is the work of God in the government of the world, to repair the evil which sin has wrought. But the forgiveness is prompt, absolute and final. III. **THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN BY GOD—1.** In its nature. It does not touch the accidents of the sin, but its very essence. The accidents will be cured in time. There are two elements to be dealt with—the Divine anger and the sense of alienation and wretchedness in the child. Now as to the first, God when He forgives declares that it is gone. The sinner is slow to believe this, but it is true, and God has His own ways of lodging the sense of it in penitent hearts. 2. Its conditions. How can God forgive sin? Not by ignoring it. The answer of the Gospel is that by man's righteousness, man's iniquity has been put away. Christ stands for man before God, and His righteousness has become a stronger part in humanity than Adam's sin. One has undertaken for us, stands for us, who can make and will make God's righteousness the dominant thing, the conquering thing, the characteristic thing, in humanity; and in Christ God justifies man. But what then has confession to do with it? It is the vital link between the soul and Christ. It is the plea of the soul to the Father, Behold me, sinner as I am, in Christ. My will goes with Him; in His obedience, His hatred of sin, I desire to share; make me partaker of His victorious life. Confession, as the fruit of penitence, transmutes the relation of the soul to Christ. From formal it becomes vital. The name becomes a power. It makes, by the stirring of the thought and will of a free being, the oneness with Christ a spiritual reality. It declares that through Christ there is born in the soul that which is not sinful, which is of the essence of holiness, and ever struggling upwards towards God. Confession rests on Christ, and connects us vitally with His righteousness. 3. Its fruits. Perfect, absolute, and eternal peace, if the sinner but keep firm hold on the fact, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Man will forgive himself when God forgives him. The fruits of his sin may be there; a broken body, a stained name, poverty, struggle, and sad, sad memories. But all the anguish has gone out of the soul, all the dread, if God forgives. "All things," even the bitter fruits of transgression, "must work together for good to God's justified children. (J. B. Brown, B.A.) *The penitent's progress*—David describes three states of mind through which he passed. I. A **STATE OF GUILT.** "When I kept silence," etc. It was his own bitter experience. He darkly and sullenly turned away from God. Though a voice within him bade him turn, he would not. He hung back and shunned the presence of his God, like Adam in the garden. It is an unspeakably wretched state of mind. There are two cases in which a man may feel what David felt. 1. An awakened sinner may feel it—a sinner for the first time brought to a sense of his transgression. 2. The other case in which a man may experience what David did, is that of one who, after he has known somewhat of God and the comfort of religion, has unhappily in some degree departed from God again, and fallen into sin, and does not at once return to Him with earnest prayer for forgiveness, with full confession of his sin, with renewed applications to the blood of sprinkling. This was David's case; and this, too, was Jonah's. It is easy even for a good man, through negligence and unwatchfulness, to fall into sin and consequent misery; it is not so easy for him to arise and regain the paths of righteousness; it is not so easy to betake himself indeed to the Saviour, and, through the penitent and believing application of His atoning blood, to recover peace of con-

science, and with it renewed liberty in the service of God. But there is help for the penitent, help in the abundant mercy of God our Saviour for them that unfeignedly seek it. II. For mark THE NEXT STAGE OF DAVID'S EXPERIENCE, as it is described in the text:—"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." A great change was here. David no longer kept silence. O happy is it, when the guilty mind comes to this resolution! III. A STATE OF HOLY JOY AT BEING RECONCILED TO GOD. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose," etc. Then he represents himself as secure and happy under the guidance and protection of God. And then, once more, he has communion with God in prayer. Are any conscious of sin committed? Dissemble it not. Cloke it not. Go to God your Saviour; confess your sin; and ask forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, and thus only, can you find peace. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*)

*Penitential confession of sin:*—I. DAVID'S CONDUCT. 1. It was deliberate. "I said, I will," etc. He was not dull or unfeeling in his sense of sin; but, like one infirm in body, yet strong in courage, he resolved manfully to go through the operation, however painful, having respect to the recompense of the expected cure. 2. It was humble: "I will confess." By this is signified his intention of owning, without any excuses, and specifying, his fault—as was required of the Israelite seeking pardon (Lev. v. 5), of the high-priest making atonement (Lev. xvi. 21); and as was practised by the people (1 Sam. xii. 19), and by the prophet Daniel (ix. 3). With this would be connected submission to his trouble, as designed for punishment of his sin, and acknowledgment of its justice; to which course a particular promise was made under the law (Lev. xxvi. 40-42). 3. It was personal. "My sin." Many, anxious to pass hastily and lightly over their own failings, try to effect their purpose by making stepping-stones of their neighbours' faults. With the general confession, "I am a grievous sinner," they couple the truth, "and so are we all"; and to the admission, "I have done wickedly," they add the hackneyed saying, "this is a wicked world we live in." Thus they seem to derive a false comfort from the number of their fellow-offenders, as though the crowd of criminals could screen them from the piercing eye, or the daring band of rebels protect them from the avenging hand of a long-suffering, but all-seeing and almighty Judge. 4. It was intelligent, i. e. with understanding: "I will confess my transgressions." The word "transgression" implies a boundary-line to be passed, a fence to be broken; and, without knowing where this is fixed, a man will not be able to see and acknowledge his fault. 5. It was private: "I will confess unto the Lord." David could abase himself before the prophet (2 Sam. xii. 13) and his household (vers. 16, 17); but on this occasion he carried his burden to the Lord. It may be asked, Where is the need of confessing to that Lord who "trieth the hearts and reins, . . . and understandeth our thoughts afar off"? We answer, The need is ours, and the benefit is ours. The exercise of mentioning our sins leads the mind to dwell longer upon them, discovering their guilt more fully; and helps to mortify our pride, though no mortal ear listens to the recital. It may be further remarked, that David's confession "to the Lord" was an appeal to his judgment, as to his sincerity; and pledged the penitent to a forsaking the sins which he professed to lament. 6. The happy consequences: "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Here is a benefit, beyond the mere ease obtained by giving vent to the feelings; here is the entire removal of the guilt of acknowledged transgression. II. APPLICATION TO OURSELVES. 1. In dwelling on David's confession "to the Lord," I would by no means neglect or undervalue the exhortation of the apostle (James v. 16) to well-chosen confidence and sympathy. 2. I would suggest to parents, sponsors, and teachers, as concerned in the training of the young, the importance of insisting on the duty of confession before they pardon their offences. (*G. Newnham, M.A.*)

*A conscious sense of sin:*—I. A CONSCIOUS SENSE OF SIN IS ACCOMPANIED WITH—1. Self-abasement (Jer. ii. 26; Ezra ix. 6; Jer. vi. 15). 2. Self-condemnation (Ps. li. 9-7). 3. Such self-abhorrence must reduce the sinner, who is not altogether abandoned, to self-denial, and abstinence from his former course of wickedness. The trembling penitent adopts the language of Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 18-20); and, prodigal-like (Luke xv. 12-32), returns to his compassionate Father. II. The prodigal finding a kind reception, contrary to expectation, must be overwhelmed with GRATITUDE AND THANKFULNESS. (*J. Kidd, D.D.*)

*Repentance:*—1. Notice the elements of this repentance as they come out in this psalm: (1) Clear consciousness of sin—"I acknowledged my sin." (2) Loathing sorrow

for sin—"Mine iniquity have I not hid." (3) Confession of sin—"I acknowledged my sin." (4) Forsaking of sin (ver. 9). 2. Ask these questions: (1) Having sinned, is not this the noblest possible way in which a sinner can treat his sin—to repent of it? (2) Is it not far better and nobler thus to repent of it than heedlessly and blindly to go on in sin? (3) Do you think that, going on in sin carelessly and blindly, it is possible to go on thus toward God? (4) Therefore can you not see the necessity of repentance? (W. Hoyt, D.D.) *Selah.* *Selah*:—The word signifies a vehement, a pathetic, a hyperbolical asseveration, and attestation, and ratification of something said before. Such, in a proportion; as our Saviour's "Amen, amen" is, "Verily, verily I say unto you"; such as St. Paul's "fidelis sermo," with which he seals so many truths, is, "This is a faithful saying"; such as that apostle's "Coram domino" is, with which he ratifies many things, "Before the Lord I speak it"; and such as Moses', "As I live, saith the Lord," and "As the Lord liveth." And therefore, though God be in all His words, Yea, and Amen, no word of His can perish in itself, nor should perish in us, that is, pass without observation, yet, in setting this seal of "Selah" to this doctrine, He hath testified His will that He would have all these things the better understood, and the deeper imprinted, that if a man conceal and smother his sins, "Selah," assuredly, God will open that man's mouth, and it shall not show forth His praise, but God will bring him to fearful exclamations out of the sense of the affliction, if not of the sin; "Selah," assuredly, God will shiver his bones, shake his best actions, and discover their impurity; "Selah," assuredly, God will suffer to be dried up all his moisture, all possibility of repentant tears, and all interest in the blood of Christ Jesus. (J. Donne, D.D.)

Ver. 6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found.—*The duty of prayer*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY. We may say prayers, even the most beautiful of prayers, such as we have in our liturgy, but all this may be and yet we may never pray. If our religion does not teach us to pray, it is a religion good for nothing. The faithful pastor will urge his people to pray, and, if they will not hearken, he will pray God by afflictions to compel them to pray. II. THE TIME WHEN WE SHOULD PRAY—"when Thou mayest be found." For there is a time when God may not be found. Reprobates on death-beds have tried to find God, but could not (Prov. i. 24). Oh, do not trifle with the gospel of the grace of God. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY. "For this cause shall," etc. God heard the poor, contrite penitent when he confessed his sin, and freely forgave him all. Therefore, do none of you think, it is all in vain now for you to pray. Once, you think, you might have been heard, but not now. Oh, it is not so. The day of grace is not over, but, if you trifle now, it may be to-morrow. Therefore seek the Lord now, at once. (T. Mortimer, B.D.) *The experimental pardon of sin sought by prayer*:—I. THE THING SPOKEN OF—"For this." II. THE CHARACTER—"Every one that is godly." III. PRAYER—"For this shall every one that is godly pray." And then—IV. PRAYER AT A PARTICULAR TIME—"In a time when Thou mayest be found." (T. T. West, M.A.) *On seeking God*:—We want not encouragement of seeking God, nor need doubt of finding Him, if we take these grounds with us: 1. If we seek Him in His own house: for where should a man be found but in his own house? God hath one standing house in the Old Testament, not where His infinite essence, which the Heaven of heavens was not able to contain, but where His name and memorial dwelt: but in the New He hath a number of houses, and being omnipresent, He will be found in them all. (1) The church-assemblies. Therefore in these houses of prayer seek Him by faithful prayer, and thou shalt not miss Him. (2) Every Christian family is a house of God: where two or three consent in any one thing in His name, Christ is in the midst of them. The apostle saluteth private Christians with the Church in their houses. Therefore make thy house God's house, by setting up His worship therein, and Thou shalt have Him near thee with all sweet fellowship and fulness of blessedness. (3) Every Christian soul is a temple of God (2 Cor. vi. 16). Then make thy heart His temple, and, if thou wouldst find Him, seek Him there, thou shalt find Him nowhere else, or sooner than there. 2. As we must seek Him in His own house, so by His own light and means, and this is twofold. (1) The Word of God in precepts and promises; this is a lanthorn to our feet, and a light to our paths, by which God may be discerned, whom the darkness of the world cannot comprehend. (2) Such signs of His presence as He hath

made choice of to reveal His grace in. In the Old Testament believers must seek Him in sacrifices and ceremonies, and therein He gave them gracious answers: the ceremonies were all typical, and pointed at Christ and the good things to come in Him. So in the New Testament God hath appointed visible signs annexed to His Word, as the public service of Him in spirit and truth, the offering up of our sacrifices of prayer and praise, and frequenting of the holy Sacraments or Ceremonies; in all which He will be sought. God cannot be seen or found but by His own light, and therefore he that would seek Him, must have the light of understanding (Ps. xiv. 2). 3. We shall find God, if we seek Him, not by the eyes of sense and nature, but of faith and obedience. 4. We shall seek aright, if we seek God in God's manner, and that is in four things. (1) If we seek Him in sincerity of spirit (Ephes. vi. 18), praying in the Spirit, as knowing that we are to deal with God who is a Spirit: and in sincerity, because He is a God that loveth truth in the inward parts: this condemns hypocritical seeking, which is but deceitful (Jer. xxix. 18). (2) In fervency: men are commanded to seek for wisdom as for gold and treasures; how eagerly and instantly do men seek after gold and earthly things! Why, no labour can heat them from their desires: how much more carefully ought they to seek after spiritual graces, and most of all after God Himself! (3) In season, timely (Ps. lxxiii. 2). (4) In His Son: seek Him in Christ the only Mediator; for none can come to the Father but by the Son. 5. We shall seek aright and with comfort, if we seek Him in the right ends, namely, for Himself; not as the Jews who followed Christ for bread; not to gain the world by Him, but to gain Himself and His favour, which is better than life; yea, to obtain this, he content to seek Him with the loss of all, as the disciples and martyrs did. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Prayer the proof of godliness*.—I. THE UNIVERSAL MARK OF GODLINESS. 1. In its infancy. 2. In all stages of its growth. 3. True prayer is an infallible mark of godliness. 4. Prayer is natural to the godly man. 5. To such a man, prayer is a very happy and consoling exercise. 6. The prayers of the godly may be presented in a great many forms. II. A POTENT MOTIVE FOR PRAYING. 1. Because God heard such a great sinner as David was. 2. Because we all need pardon daily. 3. Every one who is godly will pray unto God, because he has received the pardon of sin. 4. Because troubles come. 5. Because God does hear prayer. Prayer does move the arm that moves the world, though nothing is put out of gear by our praying. III. THE SPECIAL OCCASION WHEN PRAYER IS MOST USEFUL. 1. The time of this mortal life. 2. Under the Gospel dispensation. 3. The time of the finding out of sin. (*O. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place.*—*Our hiding place*.—A man who is pursued as if he were a wild beast can appreciate the value of a safe hiding place. I. WE NEED A HIDING PLACE FOR THE SOUL. 1. For there is an enemy to our souls ever seeking their destruction. Is it true that there is a wicked devil? Some think not, but Jesus tells us that there is. He tells us also that there is a hiding place from Satan's power, and it is the Lord Himself. 2. From our own inclinations. Some years ago I was walking with one of my children over a canal on a very narrow bridge. The child was frightened, and begged me to hold her tight, as she felt as if something were pulling her down into the canal. And so, like that child, we all of us have an inclination to fall from purity, and we shall fall unless the Lord hold us fast. And He will, if we ask Him. He will no more let you fall into sin, if you call on Him with all your heart, than I would have let that child fall into the canal. Though we have an inclination to sin, there is at all times a hiding place in which our souls may shelter until the danger be past. II. THERE ARE SPECIAL TIMES WHEN WE NEED A HIDING PLACE. 1. One of those times is, when the fear of death comes upon us. Who can help us when we die? 2. Allow me to say a word about the hiding place we need when the sorrows of poverty afflict us. Ah, don't you think that such people need a hiding place? How blessed is the Gospel to them! They suffer, but they know, they feel, that our Heavenly Father cares for them. (*IV. Birch.*) *The believer's refuge*.—I. THE REFUGE WHICH HE NEEDS. Refer to David in the stronghold; man-slayer in city of refuge; Noah in the ark. The sinner needs a refuge under the guilt of sin, under the demands of the law, under the dangers of life. II. THE CONFIDENCE HE INDULGES. "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble"—not that actual exemption from trial is promised, but so preserved as that we shall not sink under it. The argument is that past deliverances are a ground of future



hope. If He delivered me as a rebellious sinner, shall He not deliver me as a praying believer? It rests on the promise and faithfulness of God—"For the mountains shall depart," etc. The Christian, after one trial, should prepare for another. It is supported by the experience of the Church. III. **THE JOY HE ANTICIPATES.** "Songs of deliverance." (*Study.*) *God our hiding place:*—There is no statement more true, and no truth more important, than that maxim of Martin Luther—"Nolo Deum absolutum." Who, indeed, can meet an absolute God? God absolute is a consuming fire. His holiness is irreconcilably hostile to sin; His justice sternly demands the sinner's punishment; and His truth obliges Him to execute the penalty of His violated law. In an absolute God there is no hope for a sinful creature. But now, through the incarnate Word, my atoning Sacrifice and interceding High-Priest, the devouring Fire becomes my protection, the almighty Adversary assumes the character of a friend, and with full assurance of faith I take up the song of the royal saint—"Thou art my hiding place, thou wilt preserve me from trouble; thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Concerning the ungodly it is said—"The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." But "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." I have seen the name of Benvenuto Cellini scratched with a nail upon the rugged stone wall of his cell in the Castello Sant' Angelo; and have handled the sad mementos of Torquato Tasso in the convent of Sant' Onofrio—his last refuge, the gate by which he entered paradise—midway between his cradle at Sorrento and his dungeon at Ferrara. But my sacred asylum can show many a worthier record and many a holier relic, for it has been the dwelling-place of the saints in all generations. Here Paul and Silas sang their midnight hymn, and the heroic exile of Patmos heard the chanting of immortal tongues. Here Ignatius challenged the lions with his "Gloria in Excelsis," and brave old Sanctus as long as he had power to speak confessed—"I am a Christian." And cheering it is to know that these, and such as these—a fire-crowned host of priests and kings—have been here before me. The cities of refuge were six, and were so distributed that one of them was always within half-a-day's flight of the man-slayer: and the gates were ever open to admit him. And yet, from one cause or another, he might not reach it. But our defence is ever accessible. Nay, I carry my refuge constantly with me: and not as the Arab carries his tent, or the soldier his shield, or the turtle its shell; for Christ is not only immanent in His word and movements, but dwells—a living Spirit—in every living heart. And the provision is as vast as human want and as various as human woe. And there is perfect safety there. The psalmist is certain of it. "Thou wilt preserve me from trouble." Not, indeed, from earthly ills—the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to; but with Thee always present I can endure these. But from sin, the source of all trouble, and itself the only real trouble, I know Thy grace is sufficient to save me. My faith, like the eagle's wings, bears me above the hurtling thunder into the eternal sunshine. Like the skylark, I sing as I soar, and pour music out of the cloud. Like the nightingale, I lift a cheerful lay in the twilight, and charm the night with melodies of love and hope. Thus will the Lord, my hiding place, compass me about with songs of deliverance. (*J. Cross, D.D.*) *God a hiding place:*—Adam hid from God; David hides in God. 1. From the penalties of a broken law. 2. From the enmity of man. 3. From the trials and sorrows of life. 4. From the fear of death. (*C. D. Bell, D.D.*) **Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.**—*Saints preserved from trouble:*—If we content ourselves with that word which our translators have chosen here, "trouble," we must rest in one of these two senses; either that God shall arm, and endue those that are His, with such a constancy, as those things that trouble others, shall not trouble them, but, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in them, so their consolation also aboundeth by Christ, as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and behold we live, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things"; for God uses both these ways in the behalf of His servants; sometimes to suspend the working of that that should work their torment, as He suspended the rage of the lions for Daniel, and the heat of the fire in the furnace for the others; sometimes by imprinting a holy stupefaction, and insensibleness in the person that suffers, so St. Laurence was not only patient, but merry and facetious when he lay broiling upon the fire; and so we read of many other martyrs, that they have been less moved, less affected with their torments, than their executioners or their persecutors

have been. That which troubled others never troubled them; or else the phrase must have this sense, that though they be troubled with their troubles, though God submit them so far, to the common condition of men, that they be sensible of them, yet He shall preserve them from that trouble so as that it shall never overthrow them, never sink them into a dejection of spirit, or diffidence in His mercy. They shall find storms, but a stout and strong ship under foot. They shall feel thunder and lightning, but garlands of triumphant bays shall preserve them. They shall be trodden into the earth with scorn and contempts, but yet as seed is buried, to multiply to more. Thou shalt make me insensible of it, or Thou shalt make me victorious in it. (*J. Donne, D.D.*) *Preserved in Christ Jesus*:—There used to be an old battered safe standing in the Broadway, New York, on which was the notice, "It stood the test; the contents were all saved." It had been in one of the hottest fires New York ever saw, but the old safe had carried its treasures safely through it all. No life so safe as that which is guided and controlled by Christ. (*J. Ellis.*) *Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*—*Songs of deliverance*:—Song is the natural language of the feelings. The heart in song seeks relief, as the swollen lake flows over in rills that make music as they flow. Songs of deliverance, therefore, are above all others songs of joy. And joy is far more vivid when it is a recoil from grief or terror, than when it is a continuance or higher degree of the same joy. And such songs strike, also, most powerfully the chords of feeling in other hearts and call forth an echo: for all can sympathize in such joy. And they are peculiar to men. Angels have no dangers, devils no deliverance. They are characteristically human songs: they stamp the singer a native of earth. See the song at the Red Sea (*Exod. xv.*; and that in *Judges v.*). And we, too, have songs of deliverance. Let us speak of some of them. I. *THAT SUNG ON OUR DELIVERANCE FROM THE MOST APPALLING DANGER.* The Christian's most thankful praise is praise for deliverance. The joy that breathes in his song is the joy of recovered safety. His whole happiness is a treasure rescued from utter wreck; he is a delivered man. In whatever scene, with whatever fellowship he mingles in his eternal career, he shall be marked as one that has been delivered. All the greatness that may yet come to him, all the blessedness that eternity shall put to his lips, all the glory to which his nature may ascend, cry out of deliverance. His is not the joy of the happy child who has never passed beyond the home of love and purity, but the joy of the reformed prodigal, who, despite a wasted heritage, blighted hopes, and a dishonoured name, has, after weary wanderings, again found a home of peace and love. II. *THE BELIEVER'S SONG OF DELIVERANCE FROM EARTHLY SORROWS AND TROUBLES.* As the Christian has many a sorrow, so he has many a song. He has songs of deliverance when the judgments which threatened to overwhelm him have not been permitted to come nigh; songs of deliverance when they have come, and all God's waves and billows have gone over him, and he has passed through the cloud and the sea unharmed. Even the dread chastisements of God which came upon David in consequence of his sin lost their terribleness and all that should make them dreaded. They were henceforth to work together for good; and therefore he lifts the song of deliverance, though the troubles were still with him. Evil in its outward aspect is not changed, but to the soul its spiritual relation is reversed. In the life of the true penitent the fruits of past wickedness, severed from the tree that nourished them, lose their noxious quality, and fatten the soil for future harvests of good. And therefore the pardoned sinner counts it all joy when he falls into tribulation. Hear again David's song: "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." III. *THE SONG OF FINAL AND ETERNAL DELIVERANCE.* It is not till the Church has reached her heavenly home, and every member of the great body of Christ is finally redeemed from the power of the world,—and death, the last enemy, destroyed, that the glorified Church shall stand on the shores of the glassy sea, and swell high the anthem of triumph that began in the deliverance of Israel under Moses, and is consummated in the triumph of the Lamb, over the world, and sin, and death, and the grave. Then her joy shall be full, in the sense of her own safety assured for ever against all enemies. Nothing shall remain but joy and song. (*J. Riddell.*) *Compass me about with songs of deliverance*:—That is, not to have one or two, or a few occasions or deliverances to sing praises to God for, but abundant, yea innumerable causes to praise and magnify God, so as a man can look no way round about him, but he shall see many and infinite mercies, and so many

songs and praises, every new mercy being a new matter of a new song of deliverance. For look as when a man hath endured an heavy, dark, and uncomfortable night, the morning approacheth, and light begins to appear, not in any one side of the heavens, but on every side, that, let a man look where he will, the light compasseth him, and it groweth lighter and lighter until perfect day: so, although God's children seem to be in darkness and in the night of affliction, yet God affords some deliverance, and brings the joyful morning, and then they see the light of comfort on all sides, and can say, Now they are compassed with light and salvation. So as the thing which our prophet here professeth, is; first, that the Lord would afford him matter enough to frame and compile holy songs of joyful praise and thanks. Secondly, that this matter should be so plentiful and abundant, that nothing should on any side be about him, but that whence he ought to provoke himself to return joyful thanks, he should be begirt with blessings and mercy. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Many deliverances, many songs:*—What need is there of plurality of songs: may not one song serve; and if one may, what need many? One song perhaps may serve for one deliverance; but if there be many deliverances, must there not be many songs? And must there not be many deliverances when there are many bondages? And are there not many bondages when I incur a new bondage as often as I commit a new sin? And yet another reason as great as this: for say that God's deliverance be but one, will that one deliverance require but one song? O my soul, it deserves, and therefore requires, I say not a plurality, but an infinity of songs; for there must be some songs to express it, and others to extol it; some songs of "miserere" and others of "magnificat"; some "de profundis," and others "in excelsis"; some songs of praise, and others of thanksgiving; and though there will be a time when all these songs shall be collected into one, and so collected make the great "Canticum Canticorum," yet till that time come there will be need of many songs; and seeing I shall need many, I hope, O God, Thou wilt not see me want, and tie me to one song, but wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. (*Sir Richard Baker.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.**—*A teachable disposition:*—A teachable disposition is implied by the notable words, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." We lay great stress on these words. It is manifest that the eye of God can guide none but those who are diligently observing the lightest indications of His will. And the following verse contains a warning to them who are of an opposite disposition, who will yield only to harsh measures and severe discipline. A contrast is intended between those who would be guided by the eye, and those who required the bit and bridle. It is as much as to say—you have heard of those who are so blessed as to be led by God, even such as by watching His countenance catch from it the least signs of His will. Be not ye, then, careless and stubborn, resembling those beasts who need the rein and the muzzle, and whom nothing but force will keep in the right path. But let us consider the first of these expressions, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Now this supposes great attentiveness on the part of those who are led, great desire to know the will of their Guide. See an affectionate child; he will gather his father's will not merely from his actual words, but from looks, tones, gestures; and when he cannot do much more than guess what that will is, he will act on what is likely, rather than excuse himself by the want of more distinct information. Now this is the disposition which God here approves. The party whom He would guide with His eye must be one who will search out the slightest hints, the briefest intimations, and will not demand in every case express categorical instructions. The Bible seems to be largely constructed on the principle that God would guide His Church with His eye, truths being often intimated rather than affirmed, left to be discerned by the attention, and not exposed to every cursory observer. Now apply this—I. **TO SOME SUBJECTS ON WHICH WE ADMIT THAT FULL DIRECTIONS, PLAIN COMMANDS, ARE NOT GIVEN IN SCRIPTURE.** To infant baptism, for example. From Christ's receiving of little children surely we may gather that it is the Lord's will that we should receive them thus into His kingdom. And to the observance of Sunday, the Christian Sabbath. And to Episcopacy as a form of Church government. Are there not hints, and indirect evidences on all these points which, while not sufficient for the hard, dogmatical temper—the worst in which we can read the Bible—are yet to him who desires above all things to do his Lord's will, sufficient to deter-

mine his judgment and to guide his conduct? Those who will yield to nothing but mathematical demonstrations may be likened to animals who must be ruled by bridle and bit. There is in Scripture much that is adapted for the management of the restive and stubborn; but its general character is that of a document designed for the docile and meek. Hence we shall miss much of its instruction if we yield only to the hand and will not follow the eye. II. TO THE TRUTH OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE. Some deny, some ridicule, such a doctrine. It is easy to pour contempt upon it, and some of its advocates have, by their extravagance, almost justified such ridicule. But what is God's guiding us with His eye, but His indicating to us His will by means of the providential events, and these often the most common and ordinary, of our daily lives? There are times in almost every man's history at which he owns the workings of God, but if we believe in an universal Providence, and will be on the look-out for God's hand and will, we shall find in the events of everyday life as convincing proofs of the Divine working as though life were a series of miracles. He who is always noting the Divine providence will grow so used to its workings, as to be able, in a measure, to prepare for the future from what he has marked in the past and in the present. But this promise supposes us to be looking at the eye which is to guide us. It is not enough that that eye be fixed on us; our own eye must also be fixed on God: and it is only, so to speak, when the two eyes meet that we can gather instruction as to the way we should take. If God promised to guide us with His voice, we might not need to be so watchful. But we must be so if He is to guide us with His eye. We must be ever on the watch for the intimations of His will. If we are not we oblige Him to use harsh measures, and to compel our attention by something startling and severe. Much has been said about the language of the eye. Think for a moment of the look which our Lord cast upon Peter, and how much that said to him, and what an effect it had upon him. There are striking and startling events of God's providence, and they are His voice, but there are noiseless and more common ones and these are the glances of His eye. The former are as the shoutings of a foe to drive us from the wrong path, the latter as the leadings of a friend. And God desires to direct us by these rather than by the others. If He have recourse to stern methods it is only because gentler ones have failed. God doth not afflict willingly, but, alas! men are "born like the wild ass's colt," and a mere look will not tame them. Let us refuse to be guided by the eye, and it will be needful to be curbed by the hand. But even the glance of the eye may be terrible. The wicked at last will pray that the rocks and hills may fall upon them and hide them from its glance. Let us not so live that at the last it shall be lit up with anger, when now it seeks to guide us by its love. (*M. Melvill, B.D.*) **I will guide thee with Mine eye.**—*Guidance by the eye*:—Life is often called a journey; and with good reason. We set out with the freshness of youth; we pass the seasons like milestones on the road; and we are generally weary enough when we reach our journey's end. Every morning we enter as completely on the unknown as any traveller in an unexplored region; and, moreover, we are hastening to another country. We cannot wonder, therefore, at the universal longing for guidance. If we had merely to conduct the affairs of the present life, so as to make the best of it, and bring ourselves safely to the end of it, we should still desire a wisdom above our own to direct us. How much more, then, when another life comes in question, one for which this is merely a preparation! Every thought we think, every act we perform, should, with us, be determined not by the laws of this world, or only so far determined by the laws of this world as these are in accordance with those of that kingdom to which we belong. It is clear, then, that we, of all men, need guidance from our Leader above. And this guidance, so earnestly desired by us, so greatly needed by us, is promised. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." The idea conveyed would be one most familiar to David, as an Eastern monarch. As he sat in state, he was surrounded by a number of servants eager to do his bidding. Their eyes were constantly fixed on him; and when he wanted this or the other service done, there was scarcely need for him to speak. Each knew his post; the eye of each servant was dutifully fixed on his lord; and at a nod, or a sign, a turn of the eye, he flew to do the required service. I. WHAT THIS GUIDANCE BY THE EYE IMPLIES ON GOD'S PART. 1. That His eye will always be upon us. This fact has, naturally, two sides to it: fear and dread for those whose lives are an act of rebellion against God, peace and comfort for those who love God, and whose wish it is to keep near His side

through the dangers and perplexities of this troubled life. 2. That He will never expect a service on our part without a bidding on His part. II. WHAT THIS GUIDING BY THE EYE OF GOD IMPLIES ON OUR PART. 1. That our eyes, our minds, our hearts, should be constantly fixed on God. We are perplexed as to the right way, but why? Have our eyes never wandered from God? May not He have been plainly telling us the way when our eyes were earthward instead of heavenward? and so, may we not, by our forgetfulness of Him, have missed the one sign, the one clue which would have made all our way plain? 2. But after all, you will say, we are but dealing in figures still. What, then, apart from figures, does this guidance by the eye of God practically mean? (1) Guidance from a distance. The time was, as you know, when God led His people by the hand. They saw the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and they heard His voice in dreams and visions. But those times are passed. We are no longer led by the hand, in that sense; but guided, as from a distance, by the eye. (2) Guidance by the slightest signs and indications. Signs were all that the servant had to act upon who was guided by the eye of his lord; and since God has told us that He will guide us by His eye, by signs, which will require intelligence and thought on our part to interpret. God now treats us as men: we are no longer to be led by the hand, but guided by the eye. But when we pray for guidance, and wait in vain for an answer to our prayers, have we always remembered this? We pray that the way may be made quite plain, hedged up, as it were, so that there can be no room for doubt for us. We mean, in other words, that without the care and responsibility of choice, we should like the road to be made as clear to us as it is to the horse by the man who is riding him; and because this is not done for us, we say that God does not hear our prayers. 8. What are the signs by which God chooses to guide us His people now? They are, for the most part, undoubtedly, to be gathered from the study of His Word, and, above all, from imbibing His Spirit. I believe that a sincere Christian may take the events of life as signs from the eye of God; but he must do so with great care. Before a man is justified in taking any event or occurrence as a sign from God, he must be sure of three things:—(1) That he has asked for guidance. (2) That he has used his own intelligence and common-sense as far as it will go. (3) That he still needs guidance, i. e. that he is not merely looking for what he may persuade his conscience is a sign, in order that he may escape from some clear command of duty. III. THE GUIDANCE MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT IS, IN A SENSE, OPTIONAL ON OUR PART, THOUGH THERE IS, OF COURSE, ALSO A SENSE IN WHICH GUIDANCE BY GOD IS INEVITABLE FOR ALL MEN. God offers us His love. He is anxious that we should look to Him as our Father. His will is that in every event of our life we should see a token of His love and care, a sign from His eye; but, if we will not do this, if we will have none of His reproof, if, instead of trusting Him, we rebel and murmur, then those very events which might have been signs to us of Fatherly care, will become as galling bits in our mouths, forcing us against our will. They will be as bridles over our heads, not guiding us where we would gladly go, but dragging us along the paths of just retribution. Can we hesitate which guidance we will accept, the guidance of law or of love, the guidance of brute or of children? (*W. F. Herbert.*) *Guidance by God's eye*:—Human life is a most hazardous journey. It lies through difficult regions. Youth travels in "slippery places." Maturity is beset with snares. Age has its peculiar dangers. Our steps are dogged by enemies and surrounded with perils. This being so, the text is rich with encouragement and consolation. God guides us with the eye of—I. DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE. The future is as plain to Him as the past to us, and He has ordained all in love. II. CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS. 1. Direct. He never loses sight of any one. No individual is missed in the crowd. No need, no trouble, and no sin can escape His eye. 2. Unceasing. He is never weary of looking down upon His people. Though He has seen frequent failure, the riches of His long-suffering are not exhausted. Though He may have seen in us a sinful heart, an unwilling spirit, an unrestrained temper, a dissatisfied mind, a wandering path, a miserable service—a faithless discipleship, yet He watches over us still. I. LOVING SYMPATHY. The master when he parts with a trusty apprentice does not forget him. He follows him with interest and affection all through his after life. His eye is upon him. The young man knows this, and it is one of the incentives to uprightness, and of his restraints from vice. In some sense the master guides him by his eye. In some feeble measure this represents our relation to our heavenly Father. He promises to guide us by His

eye. We are to live, saying in our hearts, "Thou God seest me." We are to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." (*F. W. Goadby, M.A.*) *The guiding glance*:—This seems rather a strange kind of promise to make, as we read it first; but when we begin to think over it, it does not seem quite so strange, for I am sure you know very well how to be guided with the eye. When you are doing something you are not quite sure about, and you look up at father, you can tell in a minute, can you not, by the look in his eye, whether he thinks you are doing right or not? So, you see, there are a thousand ways in which one can guide another by a glance of the eye, for the eye can speak as well as the tongue; it can speak of joy or fear, of pleasure or pain; it can encourage and it can threaten; it can whisper love or flash anger. The eye is a wonderful guide. But can we see God's eye? No; not just as I can see yours and you mine: but the text means that God will guide us by little things and in gentle ways, if we are willing to be guided and won't be stubborn like the mule. Thus by little things, and gently, would He guide us. Shouldn't we try, then, to understand these glances of God's eye, and what they mean, better and better, every day? How can we do that? There is but one way—by praying often; for when we pray, we are very near to God, and you know, the nearer you get to a person, and the oftener you get close to him, the better you begin to understand him—you can tell better and better what he means by every look. It is the same with God. If you would understand Him when He wants to guide you with His eye, you must often draw very near to Him by prayer. (*J. Reid Howatt.*) *Men under the Divine government*:—I. The way in which ALL men SHOULD BE controlled by God. "I will instruct thee and guide thee with Mine eye." This implies that men should be controlled—1. Intelligently. For His "eye" to guide us we must have the power to watch and interpret it. God guides planets by His arm, brutes by blind impulse, intelligences by His look. How much meaning there often is in the human eye!—more than the richest vocabulary can express! How significant the look of God! 2. Readily. The mere look of God should be enough. We should not wait for words, not for whispers, still less for thunders. The attitude of the soul should be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Here am I; send me." 3. Constantly. The eye of God is everywhere. II. The way in which SOME men ARE controlled by God. "Be not as the horse," etc. These words imply that some men under the control of God act—1. Irrationally. "Like the horse and the mule they have no understanding"—that is, no understanding as to the right way of life. 2. Fractiously. "Whose mouth must be held in," etc. Thus it is with wicked men; they oppose God; they are determined to have their own way. But God holds them in by force. 3. Dangerously. "Lest they come near unto thee." Wicked men are dangerous; they would ruin the world if God did not rein them in. (*Homilist.*) *The guiding eye*:—I. THIS ASSURANCE OF DIVINE COUNSEL AND GUIDANCE RESTS ON THE CONVICTION OF GOD'S NEARNESS TO US. So near is He that He can guide us with His eye. This truth is constantly asserted, but it is impossible for us to conceive how the eye of God is upon each individual amongst the millions of mankind. The conception is too great and high for us, for in and all around us are of but limited powers. Science comes to aid our faith here. The microscope shows us the myriad animalculæ in each drop of water, but all perfect. To God, therefore, nothing is small. He is absolutely unlimited in faculty. And when we add on the idea that the nature of God is love, then we are led to think of each one being reflected in Him, not as on an impassive and unfeeling mirror, but as on the heart of God, who is love. Say not, it is too good to be true. You need never be afraid of your conceptions of God outreaching the reality. They are more likely to fall short. And the thought of God's omniscience is not terrible to us except when we sin. And when we sin, the knowledge of the love we have grieved is the mightiest power to reclaim and restore us. For no earthly sorrow equals in intensity the sorrow of God over our sin. II. THIS DIVINE KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO COUNSEL, TO GUIDANCE OF OUR LIFE. Where love is knowledge cannot be passive: it must serve its object. And so the parents' love and knowledge finds expression in the training of the home, or in the letters of loving counsel sent to the child. And it is so with God. (*W. G. Horder.*) *The guidance of the eye*:—We have many organs, but none so expressive as the eye; many languages, but none so eloquent as that of looks. But what they say can only be interpreted by affection. We guide strangers by the directing finger or the spoken word, and servants by commands, but friends by the eye. And these understand. Therefore this promise assures

us that we are not servants, but friends. Of old God spake by Urim and Thummim; but now by His eye. And it is our fault, our wayward will, that hinders our being thus guided. But as rational and as redeemed men, the guiding invitation of the eye should suffice to rule us. And how gracious of our God to adopt this method with us. The Gospel is a guiding of us with the eye; our whole spiritual life is ruled and shaped by love. But, remember, if any will not be thus guided, God will hold them in with bit and bridle. "If you will be as beasts before Him, He will deal with you as with beasts:" the cold, sharp bit will be thrust between your teeth, and the lash not spared. (S. Coz, D.D.) *I will guide thee with Mine eye*:—"A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back," is the pithy sentence of the Book of Proverbs. It describes the method by which God distinctly seeks not to rule us, if He can help it, but which we are constantly compelling Him to employ by wilful and determined sin. It is a deep pain to a wise and generous man to govern children or guide the State by fear. "I will have no state of siege. Any one can rule in a state of siege," said Cavour. How earnestly great teachers—men with the lofty faculty of head-masters like Dr. Arnold—strive to establish a nobler chain of influences than terror can generate, and to bring warm, generous young hearts into such vivid sympathy with their own natures that they can guide them with the eye. It is the principle of our Lord's words. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." I. GOD IS THE INSTRUCTOR AND GUIDE OF MEN. He is no Epicurean God, careless of the interests and concerns of men, but the God whose care for the world brought Him to live in it that He might share its burden and its pain. It is essential that we should understand that God cannot leave men unrul'd. He cannot surrender the powers of life to be wielded at will by sensual and malignant hearts. A fool's paradise, a knave's, a demon's—what sort of a world were that for any man to dwell in? Suicide then would be the queen of the arts, as it was once in the Roman Paradise, of which Virgil and Horace dreamed. No, God the Ruler, responsible for the universe He has made to suffer or to be blessed, appoints and holds the limits beyond which freedom shall not pass in defiance. His hand is on the most daring rebel, compelling him to range within bounds. II. THE MORAL CONDITION OF VARIOUS MEN AND CLASSES WITH REGARD TO THE RULE OF GOD. 1. There are the utterly godless; men who care for no restraint, who ask, "Who is the Lord, that?" etc. Often they seem to escape the eye and hand of God. But it is not so. A hard bar meets them at every turn, a check at every breath. God rules them with a rod of iron. Blind to the glance of His eye, they must writhe under the pressure of His hand. 2. The indolent among His own children—hearts sluggish and lazy, that will not rise up to the sympathy of friends. They will not reject God. They know already that there is no blessing which is really worth anything but God's. They would weep bitterly, and feel that life was utterly impoverished, if God's presence were gone from it, and they were just left to make the best of a world that they love too well. But they will not risk too much in seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. One eye is always on the world, if the other is on God. But they have to be driven in the way which they say they love, and this at a cost of pain to them and patience to Him, which God only knows. And what are the instruments? There is—1. Adversity. See how He dealt with Jacob. God kept him always in sorrow as a means of keeping him near to Himself. "I have lost my health," cried one to a minister—one who knew well that her health had not been nobly used. "Take care that you do not lose your sickness too," was the answer. It went home, and led her to turn to God. 2. The prison of circumstance. Many are bound as with iron bands to irksome, wearisome duties; but wrestle as they may, the bonds hold. They must work on or starve. And they do work on, but loveless, joyless; because they must, not because they would. It is God's school of compulsory discipline. 3. Inward terrors. God can speak to the soul when none hears. Out of the deep silence a voice may break to daunt and humble us, to make all mere possession worthless, and set us face to face with God. 4. Death. Many a child of God lives in almost slavish fear of dying. And God keeps the terror before them, that He may hold them by its chain, as they will not be held by the bands of His love. Multitudes are sobered and restrained by this fear, servile though it be. III. THOSE IN WHOM THE LORD FINDS FULL SYMPATHY, and sees the end of His culture fulfilled. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." The eye indicates the desire, the lips the command, the hand compels. Those who know the language of the eye have mastered the

language of the soul. 1. It implies sympathy. 2. Vigilant duty. 3. Perfect delight. To be guided by the eye we must love supremely Him who guides. And as the fruit of this the light of God's countenance shines on us evermore. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Divine guidance*:—I. THE PLACE OF GUIDANCE. 1. The place of forgiveness. 2. The place of confession. 3. The place of prayer and of communion. 4. The place of personal appropriation of the presence of Jesus. II. THE PROCESS OF DIVINE GUIDANCE. 1. The exterior process. (1) Conscience. (2) The Word of God. (3) The Holy Spirit. (4) The outward providences of God. 2. The interior process. (1) Map out the whole circumstances in the presence of God simply, as far as you know them. (2) Bring your will while it is yet in a fluid condition, if I may so speak, and place it before God, that He may mould it and direct it before it is solidified. (3) There must be a deep detaching of your affections in the matter, by the power of the Holy Spirit; your affections must be untwined, ready to twine round whatever God tells you is His will. (4) Then bring all the materials naturally found for forming a judgment, and spread them out in the presence of God. (5) After thus yielding your will, after detaching your affections, after preparing an altar of sacrifice by bringing all the materials for forming a judgment, and after laying yourselves upon it, what next? Wait. Scarcely a Christian dare do it. And I venture to say this is why so few hear the voice of God. We all have the written Word, but He speaks behind it, as well as through it. (*C. A. Fox.*) *The wonderful guide*:—Now, if we start in the journey of life without a guide, we shall be sure to go astray and wander from the right path. We shall find many guides offering their services, but who will only lead us on to ruin. We are better without them. The only safe guide, on whom we may always rely with confidence, is Jesus our Saviour. It is He who says so tenderly in our text, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." What wonderful power there is in the eye. How much it can say. Jesus has three things that He makes use of in guiding His people—I. HE HAS A WONDERFUL EYE. The eye is the emblem of knowledge, and the Bible tells us that "the eye of the Lord is in every place, beholding," etc. This wonderful eye that takes all things in shows the perfect knowledge of Jesus. It is important for a guide to have a clear and proper knowledge of everything the persons he is guiding will need in their journey. Suppose you start on a journey. At night it becomes very cold; but your guide has provided no warm clothing, and made no preparations for a fire, then how much suffering there will be! Or suppose there is a river to be crossed, and you have no means of crossing it, what trouble that will cause! But if we take Jesus for our Guide in the journey of life which is before us, we need fear none of these things. "He seeth the end from the beginning." He knows everything that we can need through the whole course of our journey; His wonderful eye takes in at a glance the guidance which His people need; and He leads them in the right way. II. JESUS HAS A WONDERFUL HAND. The hand represents power. He makes use of His eye and His hand, His knowledge and His power, to guide and help His people. III. HE HAS A WONDERFUL BOOK. In foreign travel a guide-book is indispensable. It tells us all the things we want to know on our journey. So is the Bible to us poor lost sinners; and chief of all, because it guides us to Jesus. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The leading of God*:—What a frail thread of guidance for a human soul! A glance of God's eye—it seems a trivial thing. Why not a pressure of God's hand, a support of God's arm, a binding of God's golden chain? Does not He guide other things much more imperatively? Has he not bound the stars with an iron belt of law? They cannot, if they would, transgress. But my soul has no belt around it. It can break away if it will; it has broken away many times. It has only the glance of God's eye, not the driving of His hand; only His direction, not His force, to guide. Wherefore is it so? Is not my soul of more value than many stars? Is it not a deeper note in the music of existence than all the harmony of the orbs of light? Why has it merely the guidance of the eye? Just because it is meant to be a deeper harmony. What is it that makes thy life an intenser note than the music of the stars? Is it not just the fact that thou art free, just the circumstance that there is no iron belt around thee? What is this marvellous thing thou callest thy will? Wherein does its glory differ from the glory which the heavens declare? Is it not just in this, that thou art not compelled to come in? There is a guidance for thee, but it is not a star's guidance; it is a guidance of the eye. It is the only guiding which a will can get without dying. The rivers of Paradise run in their courses because they cannot get away. Not thus



would He make thy paradise, oh my soul! He would surround Himself with rivals in thy heart. He would give thy steps room to stray. He would suffer thee to be led into temptation. He would show thee the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He would be loved after experience; He would be, not the inevitable, but the chosen, one. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.**—*Bit and bridle: how to escape them.*—I. A PRIVILEGE TO BE SOUGHT. 1. This guidance is very full in its nature. (1) God is prepared to give you an inward understanding of spiritual things; for His instruction is intensely effectual upon the mind. (2) God adds the precept to the doctrine, and instructs us in both. (3) Here is fellowship as well as instruction; for the guide goes with the traveller, and thus will God, in the process of our instruction, give us fellowship with Himself. 2. This teaching is divine in its source. Our Lord may instruct us by men who are taught of Himself; but, after all, the best of His servants cannot teach us anything profitably except the Lord Himself teaches by them and through them. What a wonderful condescension it is that the Lord should become a teacher! 3. Observe how wonderfully personal is this promised guidance. The Infinite focusses Himself upon the insignificant! 4. This teaching is delightfully tender. 5. This teaching is constant. II. A CHARACTER TO BE AVOIDED. 1. We are not to imitate creatures of which we are the superiors. One said, in my hearing, as an excuse for a passionate speech, "I could not help it. If you tread on a worm it will turn." Is a worm to be the example for a saint? 2. We must mind that we do not imitate creatures to whom we are so near akin. A large part of us is animal, and its tendency is to drag down that part which is more than angelic. How abject, and yet how august is man! Brother to the worm, and yet akin to Deity. Immortal and yet a child of dust. Be ye not the prey of your lower natures. 3. We are not to imitate creatures devoid of reason. Be sensitive to the Spirit of God. "Give me understanding and I shall keep Thy law." III. AN INFLICTION TO BE ESCAPED. Do not drive your Saviour to be stern with you. Do not choose the way of hardness—the brutish way. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," for then you will become sad, gloomy, dull, stupid, and full of disquietude. IV. A FREEDOM TO BE ATTAINED. There are children of God who wear no bit or bridle: the Lord has loosed their bonds. To them obedience is delight: they keep His commands with their whole heart. The Son has made them free, and they are free indeed. 1. They are free, because they are in touch with God. God's will is their will. They answer to the Lord as the echo to the voice. 2. Because tutored. 3. Because always trusting. 4. Because tender. (*O. H. Spurgeon.*) *That reason is an insufficient guide:*—That the will of man stands in need of restraint and control is an acknowledged truth: but it has been of late discovered that reason is all-sufficient in itself; that it wants no spur to stimulate, or curb to check it; but that, if left to take its own course, it is liable to no error—it never fails—it never injures others, or itself. Before this new doctrine be admitted, it must be subjected to the test of time and trial;—it must, like all other theories, be reduced to practice. What is religion, but the guide of reason and the controller of the will? What is law, but the restraint of individual will for the good of all? What is education, but the art of forming the will to obedience, of correcting its errors, and training it to virtue? I. RELIGION checks the vices, follies, and passions of mankind, by inculcating a belief that there is a Superior Power which created us, such as we are;—that set good and evil before us, for our free will to choose; but promised a reward for the one, and a punishment for the other. All religion, therefore, stands upon the supposition that reason left to itself is insufficient to direct us;—for if we should all choose the good of our own accord, reward and punishment must be superfluous: even false religion supposes this; nay, even a religion in the hands of the magistrate,—a political religion,—the avowed invention of man,—the product of reason itself, imputes error to reason; and preaches up the necessity of control. II. The very existence of LAW in the world is a testimony of the universal suffrage of mankind against the power of reason. If all men acted right of their own accord there would be no need of law to restrain them. III. EDUCATION, though applied first to the individual, is the last resource of society. Men form themselves into society, from their mutual fears, for mutual protection. Their notions of a Deity may be derived from tradition or revelation. But, in the ordinary course of things, both religion and

law exist before education. It is from reflection that men begin to perceive that the rising generation may be trained to habits suitable to the society of which they are to become members; and if education could act in proportion to its design, it would prevent the commission of those crimes which the law must punish. IV. BUT DO WE REALLY HOPE TO STEM THE TORRENT BY RELIGION, LAW, AND EDUCATION? Yes—if they have not lost their effect upon the mind of man. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.)

Ver. 10. **Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.**—*The portion of the righteous and the wicked contrasted:*—Note the contrast in these words. The wicked, and those who trust in the Lord. And the “many sorrows” of the one, with the encompassing mercy of the other. The psalmist, therefore, defines wickedness as a not trusting in the Lord. This certainly is not the description that would be generally given of a wicked person. You think it too mild to give of a wicked person, simply to affirm in respect of such an one, that he is a man who places no trust in God; and yet more attentive examination will serve to illustrate that scarcely could there be a more emphatic or a more melancholy description to give of a wicked man, than to declare of him that he is the exact opposite of one who puts trust in God. Why, only consider how want of trust in God leads necessarily to all that is depraved and vicious in practice. The man who is devoid of such trust has no defence left to keep him from any one species of wickedness. What is it but trust in God—trust in His character—trust in His promises—trust in His threatenings, which lies at the foundation of all that is morally excellent? Do away with this trust, and there seems to be no safeguard left to hinder from wickedness, or allure to piety. Let this trust be wanting, and where is the motive remaining, whether to animate for duty, or to warn from iniquity? And so if we were set to delineate the moral character of the righteous, we should be tempted to say far more than that he is simply one who puts his trust in God. But because this is the real essence of his character, the root from which springs all else that is good, therefore it is after all the best description that could be given. And whilst the text tells of “many sorrows” that shall be to the wicked, it does not put “joys” as the distinguishing lot of the righteous in opposition to those sorrows. But it tells of “mercy,” not of joy. Let us now seek to vindicate the assertions of the text. I. AS TO THE WICKED. Is it true that many sorrows shall be to them? It often does not seem so, but the very reverse. But wherever a man reposes his main confidence, there he rests the foundation of his peace. But as the wicked does not trust in the Lord, he must be dependent on some created source, and all such are transient and perishable. No man can satisfy the desires of the soul with anything short of God. You cannot centre your affections on any created thing. Sorrow, then, must at length be inherited by the wicked. And they accompany him now; follow him into the recesses of his soul, where conscience will speak and will be heard, and what the soul has perpetually to hear is its condemning voice. There we see how it is that many sorrows shall be to the wicked. II. AS TO THE RIGHTEOUS. Mercy shall compass him about. Mercy, that is, pity and love. He needs both, for he is a transgressor, and prone to err. Therefore he needs not only love, but pity. And they are his. They are the mercy which environ him round. Who, then, would not rather choose his portion? (R. Bickersteth, B.A.) *The sorrows of the wicked:*—I. WHO ARE THE WICKED? Describe the character of the ungodly—1. By their dislike to God, and contempt of His authority. 2. By their practical violation of the Divine law. 3. By their hatred of the righteous. 4. By their unregenerate nature. II. WHAT ARE THE SORROWS OF THE WICKED? 1. Disappointment (Eccles. ii. 4, 11, 26). 2. Remorse (Matt. xxvii. 4, 5; Ps. vii. 16). 3. Anticipation. 4. The sorrows of hell. (R. Scott.) *Mercy for those who trust in the Lord:*—This is most encouraging and consolatory. It refers to—1. The supplies with which God will favour us. What is it but mercy that feeds, clothes, and provides for us according to our several necessities? We have no claim to any of these blessings on the ground of human merit. God does not feed us because we deserve this grace: it is His mercy compassing us about. 2. The compassionate regard which God exercises toward us. When we consider our manifest defects, our imperfections, our infirmities, what reason have we to fear that God should enter into judgment with us? 3. The defence with which God will surround His people. Our enemies may beset us on every side, but mercy shall compass us

about: Job; Daniel. (R. Scott.) *The righteous encompassed by mercy*:—God's mercies are always more numerous than we see them. We choose to call one thing or another a benefit and a blessing because it happens to fit our desires, or, at least, our ideas of what a blessing ought to be. But we are too insensible, too short-sighted, to see all the stars of God's goodness in the sky. Only here and there do we perceive a point of light, a larger or a lesser sun or planet. But had we finer spiritual vision, we should perceive the innumerable points of light in what are now to us but the dark interstellar spaces. The highly-sensitized plate of the astronomical photographer reveals a countless multitude of stars where a field-glass, or even a telescope, fails to discover aught but blank space. We have not gone so far yet in our spiritual perceptions—we are not yet so spiritually sensitized—as to see our sky a blaze of light. But each new revelation, each new star or group of stars, as it appears above our horizon, ought to be an evidence that the dark is not darkness, but light unperceived. The sky of life is not merely studded with mercies. It is itself mercy. (P. Du Bois.)

Ver. 11. **Shout for joy, all ye that are upright of heart.**—*How we rejoice in the Lord*:—1. When our joy is a fruit of the Spirit of the Lord (Gal. v. 22). 2. When it looketh to God and acknowledgeth Him the true God, and in His Son whom He hath sent, His God reconciled, appeased, and well pleased (Rom. v. 1). Our prophet here calls the righteous to rejoice upon this ground. When a man rejoiceth in God's favour, forgiving sin, and in fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, then he rejoiceth in the Lord. 3. When it respecteth the special pledges of God's favour, as the works of regeneration, the happy change we find in ourselves, the shining and beautiful graces of God's Holy Spirit, with the daily increase of them: thus to rejoice in the Lord's image renewed, is to rejoice in the Lord Himself. 4. When our joy is set upon God's ordinances and Word, in which the Lord revealeth Himself, and communicateth Himself more freely unto us, when in them we get a faster hold of God, and grow up into further fellowship with Him, especially when His gracious promises feed our hearts, and we rejoice in His truth and faithfulness, making them good not only to others, but also to our own selves. 5. When we rejoice in the hope of eternal glory, both in soul and body (Rom. v. 3). Hoping and expecting and rejoicing that we shall fully enjoy Him as He is, and drink freely of that water of life, which we have already tasted. (T. Taylor, D.D.) **All ye that are upright in heart.**—*Upright in heart*:—If you carry a line from the circumference, to the circumference again, as a diameter, it passes the centre, it flows from the centre, it looks to the centre both ways. God is the centre; the lines above and the lines below still respect and regard the centre; whether I do any action honest in the sight of men, or any action acceptable to God, whether I do things belonging to this life or to the next, still I must pass all through the centre, and direct all to the glory of God, and keep my heart right, without variation towards Him. For as I do no good action here, merely for the interpretation of good men, though that be one good and justifiable reason of my good actions: so I must do nothing for my salvation hereafter, merely for the love I bear to mine own soul, though that also be one good and justifiable reason of that action; but the primary reason in both, as well the actions that establish a good name, as the actions that establish eternal life, must be the glory of God. (J. Donne, D.D.) *Notes of uprightness*:—1. That is right which is tried so to be by a right line, and stands in correspondence unto it: the right line is God's Word, the precepts of the Lord are right (Ps. xix. 8), and then the heart is upright, when it is made straight by the Word, and is squared in all things by it. Every man boasts of the rightness and goodness of his heart, that cares but a little for God's Word. 2. A right line doth ever discover that which is crooked; a good sign of a right heart is to discover, but not without true sorrow, the crookedness and hypocrisy of it, and to labour to correct and reform it (Ps. cxix. 80). Let my heart be upright in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed: a right line shames a crooked; crooked legs are ashamed to be seen: when a man fears, and is ashamed of his hypocrisy and crookedness, and ever tendeth to straightness, it is a good note of some rightness of heart. 3. Consider the things which flow from the heart: if they be single and pure, warrantable and right, then a man may know his heart is upright; for such as the fruit is, such is the tree; if thou feedest on forbidden fruit, thou art a bad tree, and thy heart far from uprightness; an upright heart suffereth not rotten speeches in the mouth, idleness in the hand, injustice in the life, drunkenness in the brain, and

disorder in the course. 4. Consider the ends and aims of our actions; the upright heart aimeth directly at God's glory in all things, but the crooked heart propoundeth ever some crooked end and sinister respect unto good actions; as many come to church, get knowledge, and profess religion for vain glory and vain ends; some thrust among godly persons, and into good company, not because they are good or would be good, but because they would be thought so. 5. Consider if thy heart be the same in private as it would be thought in public. Abraham walked in uprightness before God according to the commandment (Gen. xvii. 1), how did he reform his house, teach his family, instruct his servants, and take God with him in providing a wife for Isaac, and in all things (Gen. xxiv. 69). Isaac was the same in the field as he was in the house; he went out into the field to pray. Daniel was the same after the dangerous law that he was before, he opened his windows thrice a day as he was accustomed. So upright was Paul in his whole course, as he knew nothing by himself (1 Cor. iv. 4). (*T. Taylor, D.D.*)

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### PSALM XXXIII.

**VERS. 1-22. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.**—*The spirit of rejoicing: life adjusted to the will of God:*—"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." It is the vital condition of all spiritual rejoicing that we are right with God. Our life must be adjusted to His will, and the adjustment must be made on every side. If our communion with the Lord is only partial, we shall not reach the condition in which joy becomes inevitable. I remember that some time ago an electric bell apparatus in my home got out of order and the bell ceased to ring. I made a careful examination, and I found that two or three of the strands, which together formed the one wire, had been broken, and along the remaining strands sufficient electrical energy could not travel to ring the bell. I rectified the severed members, and so adjusted them that they were every one in communion with the battery, and in the completed adjustment there was power enough to ring the bell. It appears to me to symbolize the condition of many a life which is partially in communion with the King. It is not that there is complete alienation; it is that there are severed strands. There are departments in the life which are not connected with the Almighty, and along the imperfect communion sufficient power does not travel to ring the joy-bells. It may be that the strand between the Lord and our pleasures is broken, or between the Lord and our business, or between the Lord and some secret realm in our life which is not known to others. This severance will have to be put right, and every side of the life adjusted to the Divine will before we can become possessed by that fulness of power which will create bell-melody in the soul. And so I am not surprised that the psalmist is making his confident appeal to the "righteous," the rectified, those who are right on every side with God. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Praise to the God of creation, providence, and grace:*—I. **THE CALL TO PRAISE, AND ITS REASONS** (ver. 1-11). The first word of ver. 1 means not simply to "rejoice" (as A.V.), but to express the emotions aloud. The subjects of the invitation are addressed as "righteous" and "upright," because this was their ideal character of what they ought to be as the true Israel of God, and to them as such it was every way suitable to show forth Jehovah's praise. It was quite otherwise with the wicked (Ps. i. 16; Mark i. 25; iii. 12; Acts xvii. 18). In ver. 2 the call is to use harp and lyre with the song, the first mention of musical instruments in the Psalter. The Hebrews used wind and stringed and percussive instruments, but their precise nature cannot well be determined. II. **GOD'S SPECIAL FAVOUR TO HIS PEOPLE** (Vers. 12-22). They were His heritage; not simply a temporary possession, but one enduring by hereditary succession through a long course of ages. Their security and happiness in having Jehovah for their God is enforced anew by the assertion of His omniscience. Men can be surprised or overtaken: not so the all-seeing One. He fully understands all their doings, their origin, their motive, their purpose. All is evident at a glance. Hence His will is supreme, and all persons and things are comprehended in His control of the world. What material strength

cannot do for those who rely upon it, is secured to believers by the eye of Jehovah. That eye is directed toward those who wait for His loving-kindness. The three concluding couplets finely express the attitude of the Church in all ages—waiting, hoping, trusting. "The whole history of Israel may be summed up in Jacob's dying words, 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Jehovah.'" (T. W. Chambers, D.D.) *A call to true worship*:—I. True worship is **HAPPINESS** to the godly. "Rejoice," etc. 1. It is the highest happiness of intelligent existences. Only by worship can the profoundest cravings of their natures be satisfied, or their powers be fully and harmoniously developed. 2. The godly alone can offer true worship. II. True worship is **BECOMING** to the godly. "Comely." 1. It agrees with his character. 2. It is congenial with his spirit. 3. It is in keeping with his obligations. III. True worship is **MUSIC** to the godly. "Praise the Lord with harp," etc. Note some of the features of true psalmody: 1. Variety. Both instrumental and vocal music are here mentioned. 2. Freshness. "A new song." Whilst our religion should be as settled as the trunk of the oak—the forms and spirit of our devotion should be as changing as the foliage, now green with spring, now tinted with summer, now tinged with the brown hue of autumn. 3. Accuracy. "Play skilfully." True music is sound ruled by science. 4. Hearty. "With a loud noise." (Homilist.) *The joy which the righteous have in God*:—I. **THE DUTY**. "Rejoice in the Lord." Look upon religion in its actions and employment: and what are they? "Rejoice and give thanks." Are not these actions that are grateful and delightful? What doth transcend Divine joy, and ingenuous acknowledgments? II. **THE REASON**. It is "comely." Whatsoever is the true product of religion is grateful, beautiful, and lovely. There is nothing in religion that is dishonourable or selfish. Then we are to rejoice in the Lord. 1. For Himself, God is the most excellent object in the world. But whosoever are pleased with God, God is pleased with them: but to the wicked and unregenerate, God Himself (as good as He is) He is a burden. Let men pretend love to the things of God never so much, they will not relish them, unless they be born of God. 'Tis they that are naturalized to heaven, that relish and favour Divine things. That which is born of the world is enmity against God. Our rejoicing must be with some respect to God; and though it be in other things, yet it must be in the Lord. And this is done when we acknowledge God as the Fountain of all good, and better than all other enjoyments whatsoever; and count our enjoyments as all from Him and so endearing Him to us and obliging us to Him. Now, to enforce this joy in God, we note that joy is necessary to the life of man. The apostle hath told us that worldly sorrow causeth death. Sorrow and sadness, melancholy and discontent spoils the temper of a man's mind; it vitiates the humours of the body; it prevents the Divine, and hinders the Physician. For the Divine deals by reason; but this being obliterated, he can do nothing. And it also hinders the Physician; for if the mind be discomposed by melancholy, it doth not afford due benevolence to the body. The sour and melancholy are unthankful to God, and cruel to themselves, and peevish in their converse: so that joy and rejoicing are necessary in respect to ourselves. But also, joy is so safe for us: it will hold us back from sin, it will never be in excess, will always be sincere, and will offend none: it will keep company with gratitude and humility, and will always leave us in a good temper, which worldly joy will not do. If our triumph be in the Lord, it separates from sensual things, and from the spiritual sins of pride and arrogance. Therefore let there be always something that is spiritual in the ground, reason, or occasion, or motive of your joy. *Praise is comely*:—It is nature's sense, 'tis the import of any man's reason. Now because God doth infinitely transcend all the benefactors in the world, if any man doth not acknowledge His goodness, and praise Him for His benefits; he is sunk down into baseness, and fallen beneath his creation and nature. God loves us, and therefore He doth us good: we love God because we are partakers of His benefits. All disingenuity and baseness are concentrated in the bowels of ingratitude. He that will not be engaged by kindness, no cords of man will hold him. Then let us obey the counsel of the text. 1. Because nothing is more due to God than our gratitude; for He loadeth us with His benefits, and is pleased to please us, and doth many things to gratify us. 2. By this we give testimony of our minds to God. For we have nothing at all to sacrifice to God, but the consent of our minds; an ingenious acknowledgment. (B. Whichcote, D.D.) *Praise is comely for the upright*.—*Praise comely*:—Distinguish between gratitude and praise. Gratitude is an inward, loving sense of obligation for benefits received;

praise the expression or outward manifestation of that inward feeling. Gratitude is of the heart; praise of the lip. Gratitude is a something felt; praise a something expressed. I. Praise is comely for **EXISTENCE**. The good man recognizes God as the Dispenser of every blessing. He holds all blessings as a loan or trust, and as a faithful steward, employs them for God, not for selfish purposes. As all the rivers return to the sea whence they came, so the upright man sends all God's gifts back again in grateful homage and loving service to the Divine source of all good. II. Praise is comely for **REDEMPTION**. III. Praise is comely for **THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY**. The righteous man has something great and noble to live for, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to anticipate. In prospect, he has that which will fill the immensity of his being, satisfy to the full and for ever, the yearning of his great nature, so that the very thought of his immortality fills his soul with ecstasy, and his song with harmony (1 Peter i. 3). It is said that when Mendelssohn went to see the great Freiburg organ, and asked permission of the old custodian to be allowed to play upon it, he was refused. After a little kind persuasion, however, consent was reluctantly given. Mendelssohn instantly took his seat, and made the organ discourse sublimest music. The custodian, spellbound, drew near and ventured to ask for the name of the stranger. When it was announced, ashamed, and self-condemned, the custodian exclaimed, "What a fool am I to refuse you permission to play!" There is One standing by you who can bring forth the most heavenly strains of music from your heart. Place it in His hand and Christ will make every chord send forth celestial harmonies that would make all the angels cease to sing and be mute, that they might the better listen to the nobler music of Christ's redeemed ones. (*R. Roberts.*)

*The duty of praise:*—I. **GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS MEN ARE MOST OBLIGED TO THE DUTY OF PRAISE, AND MOST FIT TO PERFORM IT.** 1. There are many of God's blessings that are universal, in regard to these the duty of thanksgiving should be of as large extent. But since some men partake more particularly of His favour, they are in a more particular manner obliged to gratitude and thanksgiving. 2. The righteous are also most fit to perform this duty. (1) Because such men are always humble, and ready to acknowledge their unworthiness of God's goodness. (2) Because they have a quick and lively sense of it, and are apt to be tenderly and passionately affected with it. (3) Because they have always a solid foundation of true joy in a good conscience. (4) Because of that fitness and congruity which there is between praise and other virtues. As the beauty of the body consists in the exact dimensions of every part, and the symmetry and proportion of the whole: so does the beauty of the soul consist in the exercise of all Christian virtues, and in the mutual relation which they have to each other: and if any one be wanting it is a plain deformity, and will be perceived immediately. II. **GOD IS THE PROPER OBJECT OF PRAISE.** The psalmist does not tie himself up strictly to the contemplation of the Divine nature, as to its essential excellencies only, but considers them as they relate to His works, and are beneficial to His creatures. 1. Rejoice in the Lord in regard of His goodness. Whatever is pleasing to us below, is so, because we take it to be good; that is, suppose it to partake of this fountain of ever-flowing goodness. How, then, should we be transported with joy if we lifted up our thought to Him who is Goodness itself, and through His vast abundance pours it upon every creature! But yet this would not be sufficient for His universal praise, unless we consider His goodness in His works. 2. Rejoice in Him because of His wisdom; it is by this He governs and disposes of all things as in wisdom He made them all. 3. Rejoice in the Lord in regard of His power. That very power which is so dreadful to His enemies, at which the whole creation trembles, at which the everlasting mountains are scattered, the perpetual hills do bow; when He marches through a land in indignation and threshes the heathen in His anger. Power can do as much for the righteous. So that this attribute cannot be dreadful to good men, but on the contrary, must be most delightful to them. (*J. Adams, M.A.*)

*The gratitude of the upright:*—1. The gratitude of upright men is wise. The praise of the Lord becomes them well, because, while they bless God for all their mercies, they arrange them in their proper order; they prize each according to its real worth, and that most of all which is of the greatest value. 2. The gratitude of upright men is real. The praise of the Lord becomes them, because, while they praise God for His benefits, they live to the glory of their benefactor. Every gift of God furnisheth us with both a motive and a means of obedience to Him. 3. Gratitude to God well becomes an upright man, because it is humble. By publishing the gifts of God's grace, he divests himself of him-

self, and attributes them wholly to the goodness of Him from whom they came. 4. The gratitude of an upright man is noble and magnanimous. He takes the love of God to him for a pattern of his behaviour to his fellow-creatures. (J. Saurin.)

**Ver. 2. Sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.—***A harp of ten strings:*—Most of us, if we praise the Lord at all, play upon one string, or two, or three, when we ought to take a harp full chorded and with glad fingers sweep all the strings. Instead of being grateful for here and there a blessing we happen to think of, we ought to rehearse all our blessings so far as we can recall them, and obey the injunction of my text to sing unto Him with an instrument of ten strings. 1. Have you appreciated the fact that on most of your tables are luxuries that do not come to all? Have you realized what varieties of flavour often touch your tongue, and how the saccharine and the acid have been afforded your palate? For the fine flavours and the luxurious viands you have enjoyed for a lifetime, perhaps you have never expressed to God a word of thanksgiving. That is one of the ten strings that you ought to have thrummed in praise to God, but you have never yet put it in vibration. 2. Have you thanked God for eyesight? Have you realized the privation those suffer to whom the day is as black as the night, and who never see the face of father or mother or wife or child or friend? Through what painful surgery many have gone to get one glimpse of the light. The eyes—so delicate, and beautiful, and useful—that one of them is invaluable! 3. Notice how many pass through life in silence because the ear refuses to do its office. Have we devoutly thanked God for these two wonders of our hearing, with which we can now put ourselves under the charm of sweet sound, and also carry in our memories the infantile song with which our mothers put us to sleep? 4. There are many who never recognize how much God gives them when He gives them sleep. Oh, the felicities of slumber! Let all who have this real benefaction celebrate it. That is one of the sweetest strings in all the instrument of ten strings. 5. Acknowledge the power of physical locomotion. To be able to go where we wish, and all unaided—what a kindness! What multitudes have to call in the aid of crutch and invalid's chair, and their whole life is a hindrance. How hard to get about with lack of strong and healthy and supple limbs. 6. Celebrate on the instrument of ten strings our illumined nights. They spread their tents over us, and some of us hardly go out to look at them. During the nights other worlds come in sight. Thank God for lunar and stellar illumination. 7. Celebrate the possession of our reason. Amid the increasing dementia of the world, let us appreciate the goodness of God to us if our mental faculties are in equipoise. Voyaging from New Zealand to Australia, a storm swooped upon us, and we saw all around us fragments of ships that had been caught in the same tempest; and how thankful we were, sailing into Sydney harbour, that we had escaped! So that man and that woman, whose intellect goes safely through the storms of this life, in which so many have foundered, ought every day and every night to employ one of the ten strings in gratitude for that particular mercy. 8. Another string of this instrument I now touch—friendships, deep and abiding. With one such friend you can defy the world. 9. Gospel advantages. That Gospel rocked our cradle, and it will epitaph our grave. It soothes our sorrows, brightens our hopes, inspires our courage, forgives our sins, and saves our souls. It takes a man who is all wrong and makes him all right. What that Gospel has done for you and me is a story that we can never fully tell. (T. De Witt Talmage.)

**Ver. 5. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.—Thanksgiving day:—****I. HIS GOODNESS TO THE IRRATIONAL CREATION.** Although nature is out of joint, yet even in its disruption I am surprised to find the almost universal happiness of the animal creation. On a summer day, when the air and the grass are most populous with life, you will not hear a sound of distress unless, perchance, a heartless school-boy has robbed a bird's nest, or a hunter has broken a bird's wing, or a pasture has been robbed of a lamb, and there goes up a bleating from the flocks. The whole earth is filled with animal delight—joy feathered, and scaled, and horned, and hoofed. The bee hums it; the frog croaks it; the squirrel chatters it; the quail whistles it; the lark carols it; the whale spouts it. The snail, the rhinoceros, the grizzly bear, the toad, the wasp, the spider, the shell-fish, have their homely delights—joy as great to them as our joy is to us. Goat

climbing the rocks; anaconda crawling through the jungle; buffalo plunging across the prairie; crocodile basking in tropical sun; seal puffing on the ice; ostrich striding across the desert, are so many bundles of joy; they do not go moping or melancholy; they are not only half supplied. God says they are filled with good. Take up a drop of water under the microscope, and you will find that within it there are millions of creatures that swim in a hallelujah of gladness. The sounds in Nature that are repulsive to our ears are often only utterances of joy—the growl, the croak, the bark, the howl. God's hand feeds all these broods, and shepherds all these flocks, and tends all these herds. He sweetens the clover-top for the oxen's taste; and pours out crystalline waters, in mossed cups of rock, for the hind to drink out of on his way down the crags; and pours nectar into the cup of the honeysuckle to refresh the humming-bird; and spreads a banquet of a hundred fields of buck-wheat, and lets the honey-bee put his mouth to any cup in all the banquet; and tells the grasshopper to go anywhere he likes, and gives the flocks of heaven the choice of all grain fields. Why did God make all these, and why make them so happy? How account for all this singing and dancing, and frisking amid the irrational creation? Why this heaven for the animalcule in a dew drop? Why for the condor a throne on Chimborazo? Why the glitter of the phosphorus in the ship's wake on the sea, which is said to be only the frolic of millions of insects? Why the perpetual chanting of so many voices from the irrational creation in earth, and air? There is only one solution, one answer—God is good. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." II. NOTICE THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORLD TO THE COMFORT AND HAPPINESS OF MAN. He was to be king in it. Heaven and earth are represented in his nature, his body from the earth, his soul from heaven. He is a strange commingling of dust and glory. The earth for his floor; heaven for his roof; God for his Father; eternity for his lifetime. Think of his body—"fearfully and wonderfully made." No embroidery so delicate or elaborate, no colour so exquisite, no mechanism so graceful, no handicraft so divine. And all working so quietly and mysteriously. Volumes have been written of the hand. Wondrous instrument! With it we give friendly recognition, and grasp the sword, and climb the rock, and write, and carve and build. It constructed the Pyramids, and hoisted the Parthenon. It made the harp, and then struck out of it all the world's minstrelsy. Four fingers and a thumb. A hundred million dollars would not purchase for you a machine as exquisite and wonderful as your own hand. Mighty hand! In all its bones, and muscles, and joints, I learn that God is good. Behold one eye, which, in its Daguerrean gallery, in an instant catches the mountain and the sea. This perpetual telegraphing of the nerves; these joints, that are the only hinges that do not wear out; these bones and muscles of the body, with fourteen thousand different adaptations. If we could realize the wonders of our physical organization, we would be hypochondriacs, fearing every moment there must be a breakdown somewhere. But from birth to old age all goes on without failure. Take a step higher and look at man's mental constitution. The powers of perception whereby we transport the outer world into our own mind; the law of association, one thought starting up a hundred and enabling us to draw a long train of thought through the mind with incredible velocity; memory, the sheaf binder that goes forth to gather in the harvest of the past. In reason and understanding man is alone. The ox surpasses him in strength, the antelope in speed, the hound in keenness of nostril, the eagle in far-reaching sight, the rabbit in quickness of hearing, the honey-bee in delicacy of tongue, the spider in fineness of touch. Man's power, therefore, consisteth not in what he can lift, or how fast he can run, or how strong a wrestler he can throw—for in these respects the ox, the ostrich, and the hyena are his superior—but by his reason he comes forth to rule all: through his ingenious contrivance to outrun, outlift, outwrestle, outsee, outhear, outdo. I take a step higher, and look at man's moral nature. Made in the image of God. Vast capacity for enjoyment; capable at first of eternal joy, and though now disordered, still, through the recuperative force of heavenly grace, able to mount up to more than its original felicity. Thus has God adapted everything to our comfort and advantage. But for the soul still higher adaptation; a fountain in which it may wash; a ladder by which it may climb; a song of endless triumph that it may sing; a crown of unfading light that it may wear. Christ came to save it—came with a cross on His back; came when no one else would come, to do a work which no one else would do. See how suited to man's condition is what God has done for him! Man is a sinner; here is pardon. He



has lost God's image; Christ retraces it. Jesus, I sing Thy grace! Cure of worst disease! Hammer to smite off heaviest chain! Light for thickest darkness! Grace Divine! Devils scoff at it, and men reject it, but heaven celebrates it! Then let us, as well we may, celebrate the mercies of the past year, and reviewing them all, confess, yea, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Earth's brighter side:*—"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." When we learn from astronomy something about the grand scale upon which the universe is made, and when, by looking into the mind and heart of man, we behold what powers are hidden there, we ought at once to suspect that the career of man is projected upon a grand scale, and that the "goodness of the Lord" is ready to reveal itself in the phenomenon of human life. The fact that there is "goodness of God" in this world does not warrant us in expecting to find it everywhere. Aeneas and his companions roamed through a large forest many a mile before they saw the tree that bore the limb of solid gold. They had become discouraged. Their eyes were weary of the long looking, but at last they saw the yellow among the green, and soon held in their hand the bough before which the gates of heaven were to fly open. The "goodness of God" does not lie easily found; it may not lie on every hand like mere dust or lifeless stone, but all reason and all revelation assure us that somewhere in the great forest the golden bough is growing, and before the patient wanderer through the deep shade suddenly will flash up the magic branch that will open to him all the best gates of earth and sky. Making the assumed character of God our measuring line, the "happy life" of man must be only a kind of high life. There may be tears at last in such a career. All the earth will at least expire in grief, even if it does not live in it. But the life that shall come nearest to happiness, and whose tears shall burn least, and shall mingle ecstasy with sadness, shall always be the "high life" of education and morality. In the arts, those who are entitled to speak in that domain make constant use of the terms "high" and "low art." They seem to mean that the art is "high" when it presents pure and large thoughts, and when the execution by the hand is worthy of the thought. In walking through a gallery not long since, a great critic remarked, "There is fine work, but no subject. The execution is wonderful, the subject contemptible." When we walk along the great scenes of earth, and behold a man absorbed in mere money-getting, or office-seeking, or in vice, we may say there is fine work, but no subject; a fine cutting of good marble to produce a figure of no possible significance. If ever we shall get any good out of these threescore years, it will be by the formula of the artists, and there is a "high life," a doing of good work to bring out good ideas. Indeed, the fine arts are nothing else than a corner of man's continent. They are the soul expressing a part of itself in marble, or painting, or music, or architecture. What sublimity there is in the great architecture of the world, and in the heights and depths of its music! But do these arts consume all that is noble in man? Has he no greatness left? Oh, what narrow, frail creatures we are! A high life is as possible as a high art. Moral beauty is as possible as material beauty; and in his "Dialogue" Plato said, "Great is the destiny of the soul that passes from the beauty of the world to the beauty of God." Let us, however, turn from the theory of earth's goodness to some survey of the fact. Wherever a heart is turned aside from mere sensuality, from the life of a mere brute, this earth has responded to the better aspiration and has shown its willingness to lead onward and upward each nobly ambitious soul. When Socrates, and Plato, and Cato, and Seneca appealed to earth for something better than the vices of the sensualist, or the bloody fame of a conqueror, our little star heard their petition and covered them with gifts of mind and soul that will always surpass estimate. When Antonine the Pious asked our world if it had no power except that of wickedness, and no pleasure but vice, it answered him by bestowing upon him the crown of piety, and by filling him with the rapture of prayer. Pliny found this world large and beautiful. It was only too full of sublimity. All its truths lay before him as coloured shells upon the beach. In those days there was an illustrious company of mortals to whom earth was by no means small or unworthy. Looking back upon their lives, seeing their greatness of mind and of spirit, and recalling in what homes and in what libraries, and amid what poetry and eloquence and art they passed their days, we cannot but feel that the "goodness of God" lay all around them like a robe of joy and light. They may not have perceived nor felt deeply enough this infinite kindness, but if so that was not the first nor last time wherein the human heart has been

happy without knowing from what fountain its joys have come. From these reflections may we not infer that there is in this world, so denounced and so mistrusted, a form of higher life—a life of honour, of education, of love, of Christianity—which may answer all who complain and who distrust, and may make our earth seem all full of the goodness of God? There may be gems here for us all, only we are seeking for them upon the wrong shore. The past forms of human excellence indicate the fact that happiness cannot be found in things external to the soul. None of the glory of man to which we have alluded has come from property, or from fame, or from transient passions, but from the furniture of the mind and from the impulses and powers of the heart. From a survey of history, from an hour spent over the memory of all the illustrious ones in science and benevolence and religion, from a communion (even the briefest) with such a human-Divine being as Christ, the inference comes irresistibly that when earth is made the theatre of a conscientious and enlightened soul, struggling not toward riches but toward the useful and the good, then it suddenly beams out a star of the first magnitude. It no longer seems a burnt-up world, forsaken and forgotten of its Maker, but seems a chariot, with Christ standing beside the traveller, and with the wheels rolling across the open plain between time and eternity. (*D. Swing, D.D.*) *The goodness of God*:—Goodness is a very comprehensive quality. It is love, kindness, benevolence, that which leads you to wish well and to do good to those around you; and the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord because it is so full of His works and ways, which are the fruits and manifestations of His goodness. I. THE FORMATION OF THE EARTH SHOWS THE GOODNESS OF GOD. It is like a book, it contains geological leaves which proclaim its history. We read what it has been and what it might have been, as well as what it is. The various forms of life which have appeared upon it have just been introduced at those stages which were adapted to the structure of their being. We are created amid conditions that are just suited to our life, and fitted to make us happy. The light is just suited to the eye, the ear to the atmosphere. II. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, when we consider HOW FULL IT IS OF VARIOUS FORMS OF LIFE. Objects that we despise and trample beneath our feet, and forms of life that cannot be seen with the naked eye are all fearfully and wonderfully made. The microscope, which reveals to you the coarseness and the defects of man's finest works, only reveals to you more clearly and strikingly the wonderful delicacy, and harmony, and beauty of the works of God. And how many forms of life only come into existence during the sunny months or hours that are fitted to make life a luxury, and then depart when it would be a pain. III. THE AMPLE PROVISION WHICH HE IS CONSTANTLY MAKING FOR ALL OUR WANTS. He daily spreads a feast before every living thing (Ps. civ. 21; cxlv. 15, 16). What goodness the seasons annually reveal to us. Food might have been provided to sustain the life of the body without imparting anything like pleasure in the use of it. But at every stage of its preparation and use it ministers to our enjoyment. There is the blade, the ear, and the waving corn, the leaves, the flowers, the pendent fruit, which harbinger its approach, and which are a beauty and a joy. Then there is the scent which greets the sense of smell, and the pleasant taste which gives a relish to food; visions of beauty for the eye, and music for the ear. IV. THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WHICH HE HAS INSTITUTED, such as family and friendly ties. The instincts and passions, the love and moral emotions which crave these relationships, are of God. Human happiness chiefly springs from these relationships. Who can estimate the amount of happiness there is to-day, not only in the homes of the Christian and the civilized portion of the world, but also in the kraal of the Caffre, the wigwam of the Hottentot, and the hole of the Esquimaux? Even the savage and the wild beast are charmed and tamed and pleased by love for each other and family ties and social intercourse, even though the home in which they are gathered is only a lair or a den. V. THE WAY IN WHICH THIS LIFE IS MADE A SCHOOL AND A STATE OF DISCIPLINE FOR THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME. This is not our permanent home; it is only a place in which we are being prepared for a future state. School is good for a child, though the task is often a galling yoke; and so the discipline of suffering is good for man, though at the time it be not joyous but grievous. There is much from which we shrink in all the trials and adversities and bereavements of life; but Job may be a much better man when he comes out of this furnace than he was when he entered into it. VI. THE AMPLE PROVISION WHICH HE HAS MADE TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS. Mercy is one of the sublimest forms of goodness. The earth is

full of this goodness, because there is no nation, tribe, or individual excluded from it. Conclusion. 1. The goodness of God ought to be one of the strongest barriers that can be raised up against sin. 2. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance (Rom. ii. 4). 3. The goodness of God to us should lead us to be good to others. 4. The goodness of God to us in this world ought to inspire us with confidence in His goodness to us in the world to come. The nearer you are to God here the greater is your bliss. Then why should you not say and sing, even as you are passing through the dark valley to the land that is beyond: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"? (A. Clark.) *The earth a sphere of Divine goodness*.—I. FOLLOW OUT SOME THOUGHTS WHICH THIS STATEMENT SUGGESTS. 1. Think of the general arrangements of the natural system around us. We may well be impressed by that beauty which God has spread as a mantle over the face of Nature; the loveliness of fields, and trees, and flowers; the dark blue of the sky, as contrasted with the soft greenness of the objects more immediately around us, and which it solaces the eye to gaze upon. But there is also utility. Everything has its use, and is in subserviency to the ends of the system to which it belongs. Then, the productiveness of the earth. What a storehouse it is for all the necessities of the creatures. And the more we come to know in detail of the manner in which the provision is made, the more wondrous do creating wisdom, and providential goodness appear. 2. All this especially appears in what respects the human family. Each land and each district has its resources for sustenance in the different products of the earth, and the various tribes of animals created for the food of man. The vast diversity is a marvellous display of the wisdom and goodness of God. Fuel also is provided; and provided, in part, by processes which have been going on for ages and ages, apparently before man dwelt upon the earth. Mighty convulsions were all overruled as the means of furnishing us with the coal that warms us, and which maintains those schemes of manufacturing industry on which the prosperity of many lands, and emphatically of our own, so much depends. And where this is deficient, or altogether wanting, great accumulations of wood subserve the same end, the trees of the forest furnishing a perpetually renewed and probably inexhaustible supply. Where again this is too scarce or too costly, the mountaineer on the lofty hill-side, or on the upland moor, may be seen gathering in the peat or turf which warms his cottage home during winter's cold. Thus is provision made for the sustenance and, to a great extent, the comfort of men wherever their lot is cast. Over the face of the earth you see men loving their native land. Yet what a blessing, on the other hand, is the law of change! What vast benefit springs from it! When mind and body are wearied, what unspeakable refreshment comes from new scenes and associations, and the invigorating air of the hills or of the sea! Thus the body rests, nervous energy is repaired, and the mind is re-invigorated for new effort or toil. Then, in God's institutions respecting domestic life, with the beautiful charities which arise out of them and adorn them, how Divine goodness further appears! Doubtless there is much of sorrow in the earth. It entered in the train of sin. Thorns and briars, storms and tempests, disease, bereavement, etc. But the triumphs of Divine goodness are seen amidst these sources of sadness. It regulates and apportions them as to the measure in which they appear. It mitigates them, too, by compensating arrangements such as the compassion which it has implanted in the human bosom, and which teaches us to sympathize with and help one another, and markedly that law by whose operation time exerts a healing influence. Above all, it does so by making pain and grief subservient to moral improvement, so that "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." II. HOW ANXIOUS WE SHOULD BE THAT THE WORLD, WHICH IS SO FULL OF GOD'S GOODNESS, SHOULD ALSO BE THE REGION OF HIS PRAISE! We see the material creation everywhere teeming with the manifestations of His care for us. What displays of this, too, have all had in their own personal history. If, then, God has made the world, which is the scene of our probation, so bright and beautiful, and if His interpositions in delivering from danger and from death have been so many and so gracious, shall not all our hearts be responsive to such goodness? All reason surely is with the psalmist (Ps. cxix. 64). And whilst this applies to the individual, how it applies also to the world generally, and to universal man! Away in many of the most beautiful parts of that earth which is "full of the goodness of the Lord," men wander in ignorance, superstition and sin. What a sphere for our sympathies and prayers! (E. T. Prust.) *The goodness of God in*

*little things*:—I. THE INANIMATE PART OF GOD'S CREATION. 1. The light. How kind in the Creator to make it pleasant. Dwellers in polar regions, as their six months' night draws to an end, often put on their richest apparel and climb to the highest mountains, and salute with acclamations of joy the first rays of returning day. Let us be thankful for the sweet light. 2. The atmosphere which envelops us. How wise and how good that it should surround us on all sides, and yet not obstruct our sight; that it should press upon us with a weight of fifteen pounds to the square inch, and yet we be not crushed or burdened by it; that though softer than the finest down, it should yet waft the fleets of nations; that it both warms and cools the earth; that it both draws up the vapours and throws them down; that it breathes both in the north wind's blasts and in the gales of the sunny south; and that it both receives the noxious exhalations everywhere emitted, and yet affords for our lungs the pure air which vivifies and warms our frames. Let us be thankful for this daily benefit. 3. Water. In the form of the ocean, it is at once the proud highway of nations, and the play-ground of leviathan: the storehouse of man's nourishment, and the great cooler and purifier of the dusty earth. And how good in God that He hath set its bounds so that it cannot pass. In the form of clouds it tempers the force of the fiery sun, and fills the reservoirs of the skies, and drapes the heavens with curtains of gorgeous hues. And how good in God to let it down gently, as from a watering-pot, instead of pouring it down all at once, to overwhelm and destroy. 4. Flowers. A little child, bounding forth one early spring morning, from a country cottage, cried out, "Look, pa, God has sent us three dandelions!" Was not that a beautiful and becoming thought? 5. The grasses of the hills and meadows. How different if the ground were everywhere dark and naked! The spires of grass are little things, and yet but for them we had not the blessed fields, with their walks in silent, scented paths, and the joy of herds and flocks, and the downy banks and knolls, and the emerald slopes that fringe the lakes and rivers, and the peaceful lawns where fall the sounds of loving voices. 6. The changes of the seasons. How monotonous if we had the same climate the year round! What diversity comes from these changes! Each season is lovely, and illustrative of the beneficence of the Preserver of man. 7. The succession of day and night. Each day we behold the rising of the sun. Aurora has never once failed, during so many ages, to announce his approach; and he knoweth his going down. Thus does he enlighten both sides of the globe, and shed his rays on all. Thus have we the day for toil—long enough to exhaust the physical energies, and call for repose; and then night comes, of sufficient length to recruit those energies. George Herbert sings of "dear night" as "the stop to busy fools," and as "care's check and curb." Think of the accelerating swiftness of care, and pleasure, and wickedness, going on without interruption. What would the mad and anxious world come to, if night did not put on the brake, and fetch things to a standstill? 8. The endless forms of beauty which we meet. It is said of Linneus, the great Swedish botanist, that on first seeing a certain plant, he fell on his knees and thanked God for thus beautifying the earth. How much beauty do we see around us every day, and yet for this how seldom are our hearts lifted in gratitude to Him who hath made all things lovely to behold.

II. THE ANIMATE BUT UNINTELLIGENT PART OF CREATION. What object could God have had in creating these innumerable ranks of sensitive existence, except that they might taste His bounty, and enjoy a happiness peculiar to their state? Because dead matter was incapable of delight, and because the eternal Sovereign would exercise His superabundant goodness, therefore hath He stocked the world, and worlds upon worlds, with ten thousand times ten thousands of living creatures, that His table might be filled with millions of guests, whose mouths and whose hearts He might every hour and every moment fill with food and gladness. Moreover, how kind in God to care for every one of the millions upon millions of this great needy family of His; expending upon each one an equal care, so that the least insect, living but one brief hour, does not fail of his portion. And how kind to provide for all without their labour—for it is a just remark of Pierre, that there exists not a single animal but what is lodged, clothed, and fed by the hand of Providence—without care, and almost without labour. And yet, again, how kind and wise to cause each one to subserve some useful purpose to man; making even the little flies and all the winged insects to act as scavengers, by taking up and carrying off the surplus effete matter in the vegetable creation; and all the little ground-mice and earth-worms to act as Nature's ploughmen, or as sappers and miners boring in all directions into the stubborn soil, thus rendering it pervi-

ous to air and rain and the roots of plants! III. THE INTELLIGENT WORLD—OURSELVES. 1. Our outfit, our endowments. A body, fearfully and wonderfully made; heart, muscles, ears, etc. The mind, with its subtle powers of consciousness, and reflection, and reasoning; and memory, and imagination—each faculty displaying the Divine goodness. And the same of the several senses—of sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell. And what an endowment is the gift of speech, by which we may reciprocate thought and feeling, and become acquainted one with another! 2. How every thing is contrived and adjusted to secure our comfort and good. What a mercy that many functions of the body, such as breathing, digestion, the circulation of the blood, etc., are performed involuntarily; so that they go forward without our bidding or attention! And how merciful the provisions for gratifying the senses—eye, ear, etc. Another merciful provision is the social relations. 3. Think also of God's hourly deliverances. A man, riding down a steep hill, and reaching the bottom, said to one whom he met there, "I have had a wonderful deliverance." "What is it?" he asked. "Why, my horse stumbled on that hill, and I was thrown over his head and not harmed." "Indeed," said the man, "I have had many a greater deliverance on that hill than that." "And how?" "Why, I have ridden down that hill hundreds of times, and my horse has never so much as stumbled once!" The moral is plain—but how do we forget it! (H. C. Fish, D.D.) *The earth full of God's goodness*:—1. The goodness of God is seen in the productiveness of Nature. It is so natural to see the bread on the table, that we do not think of the subtle agencies at work in the production of the corn; how light and heat, rain and dew, and the fruitful qualities of the soil, all helped on the final result. The hard rock has been pulverized, and mixed with the dead matter of former living things, to make a fruitful soil. The sea has given of its moisture, and the sun has drawn the vapour into the upper air. The atmosphere has balanced the pregnant clouds, winds have wafted them to thirsty lands, mountains and hills have condensed them into rain. The sun also has poured down a daily stream of warmth and light, and the evening has witnessed the gentle distilling of the dew. 2. Man himself is not more wonderfully made than is the earth adapted to be his dwelling-place. He can live almost anywhere, for go where he will, he nearly always finds Nature producing the wherewithal to supply his wants. And in this abundant provision God's goodness is shown, just as a parent's goodness is shown towards his child in his anxiety to meet his child's wants. It shows how provident and thoughtful, on our behalf, God has been. 3. God's goodness is manifest, also, in the beauty of natural things. He has made the world fair enough to be the dwelling-place of angels. 4. We see God's goodness manifested in the structure of human society. Man is compelled by the necessities of his nature to associate with his fellows. God has ordained it because in this way only could the highest joy possible to man be reached. He has made the law which governs His own life, to be the law which governs ours. Love is the law of God's life—to live for others that He may bless them—and it is when this law is well and cheerfully observed that man's life is most peaceful, most blessed, most akin to the life of God. 5. We behold the goodness of the Lord again in the sanctities of religion. He made our hearts capable of fellowship with His Spirit and has drawn near, so that we might receive helpful inspirations from His love. He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, that men may feel His tenderness and be won by His grace; and, by the Incarnation of the Son of God, He has lifted our nature immeasurably nearer His own. (Joseph Bainton.) *The beneficence and benevolence of God*:—Our sources of knowledge of the beneficence and benevolence of God, are—1. The earth, its inhabitants; the atmosphere, and the ruling orbs of day and night; the construction of man and of all animals, and the provisions for their sustenance and safety. 2. The fixed laws by which they are all governed; the freedom of mind with which man was created and is still endowed; as entering essentially into the explanation of apparent difficulties in the Divine providence by which he is ruled. 3. The discoveries of men, scientific, moral, and philosophical, in the remotest ages, and the revelation of God and of His works which we have in the writers of the Old Testament; and especially the authoritative teaching of Jesus Christ. The testimony of our own consciences, and the trusty evidence of intelligent, thoughtful, and religious minds, competent to give information and opinion upon the subject. (R. Ainslie.) *All goodness comes from God*:—Did it never strike you, asks Kingsley, that all the goodness in the world must, in some way or other, come from God? When we see the million raindrops of the

slower, we say, with reason, there must be one great sea, from which all these drops have come. When we see the countless rays of light, we say, with reason, there must be one great central sun, from which all these are shed forth. And when we see countless drops and countless rays of goodness scattered about in the world, a little good in this man, and a little good in that, shall we not say, there must be one great sea, one central sun of goodness, from whence all human goodness comes?

Vers. 6-8. **By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.**—*The Biblical conception of Nature:*—For this, see the first chapter of Genesis. There are two opposite extremes into which our conceptions may fall. 1. We may immerse God in Nature, if we treat Nature as possessed of properties strictly personal. A very great deal of common language is vitiated by this blunder. But will is an attribute of personality, and Nature has not will. 2. We may unduly isolate Nature as God's workmanship from God the worker. We do this if we regard the universe as teaching us nothing of God, being only a whirl of material change without spiritual meaning; or as if having only a given amount of force which will run down, like a watch. But against both of these note—I. **THE WORLD IS GOD'S CREATION**—a separate thing, therefore, and inferior to Himself. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." Now a word serves two functions. 1. It is the organ of command, conveying an act of will. 2. It is the reflection of the speaker's self, revealing his nature. The great fact of the whole ancient world was this, that its multi-form religions started from a nature basis. The sun and stars, the reproductive forces of animal and vegetable life, the decay and revival of the year, was the common fact which very early riveted the attention of primitive man, till out of it there grew up in many lands, under many shapes, a system of religious observance everywhere the same in principle. Plainly this system of religion started from the Bible truth that Nature is a revelation of God. By degrees, no doubt, the Divine idea became obscured. The sense of Nature's unity grew feeble. Men came to see not so much one God speaking through all His creatures, as rather a separate morsel of divinity inherent in each separate creature. From using the sun, or the dawn, or the sky, or the spring, as a symbol only for that Invisible Being whose thoughts these objects revealed, men began to adore the symbol, and to forget the Invisible Person behind it. Easy and rapid was the downward plane to idolatry and polytheism and gross fetish-worship. Yet what is worth noting is, that such Nature-religions would have been impossible had not Nature really spoken to unsophisticated men a Divine message. This, be it remembered, was a very different thing from that cold logical argument of the modern theist, who infers a Designer from the observed facts of science. Not to the reason, so much as to the intuition, of early man did Nature address itself. It spoke poetry, not logic. We are far enough removed now from that early stage of human experience. The world is grown, and its work is not to worship Nature, but to master it. But we can only do this by observing the laws by which its Creator governs it. Thus both ancient nature worship, and modern nature study, both depend upon the fact that Nature, being God's Word, speaks to us His thoughts. II. **NOW COMPARE THE MORAL REVELATION WITH THIS OF NATURE.** 1. It starts from and builds upon the revelation of Nature. 2. It can only be understood if God be above Nature and yet present, self-revealed in Nature. 3. It agrees with the old. In absolute unity of plan. In orderly plan and obedience to fixed law. In the slowness and even laboriousness of the processes of its growth. In the stern maintenance of law, avenging all transgression. 4. But the Gospel goes on beyond and tells of redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) **He gathereth the waters . . . as an heap.**—The old versions and interpreters read "as in a bottle" for "as an heap," vocalizing the text differently from the present pointing; but there seems to be an allusion to the wall of waters at the passage of the Red Sea, the same word being used in Miriam's song; with "depths" in the next clause, there as here (Exod. xv. 8). What is meant, however, here, is the separation of land and water at first, and possibly the continuance of the same power keeping them still apart, since the verbs in ver. 7 are participles, which imply continued action. The image of "an heap" is probably due to the same optical delusion which has coined the expression "the high seas," since, to an eye looking seawards from the beach, the level waters seem to rise as they recede; or it may merely express the gathering together in a mass. Away

out there, in that ocean of which the Hebrews knew so little, were unplumbed depths in which, as in vast storehouses, the abundance of the sea was shut up, and the ever-present Word which made them at first was to them instead of bolts and bars. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Ver. 8. **Let all the earth fear the Lord.**—*The nature and influence of the fear of God.*—I. WHAT IS THE PROPER AWE AND FEAR WHICH IS DUE FROM MAN TO GOD? Distinguish between a servile or superstitious, and a filial or religious fear. The former we are to avoid as a dishonour to God; the latter we are obliged to as an indispensable duty, the true spring and motive of our Christian obedience. II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH OUGHT TO POSSESS OUR SOULS WITH THIS AFFECTION TOWARDS THE DEITY. Can we reflect on the infinite knowledge and omnipresence of God, and not stand in awe of that Being from whom even the most secret thoughts and intentions of the heart are not concealed? Or, can we remember that He is infinitely just, without a religious concern for the event of that day, when we must appear before His impartial tribunal? But the attribute which especially demands this affection from us is His power. None can resist or interrupt the execution of His will; He has power to save, and power to destroy; nor is He accountable to any for His dominion over us. But these arguments arising from the perfections of the Deity will yet more effectually possess us with this reverence, if at the same time we reflect with a just humility on ourselves. That we are indigent, defenceless beings; the dependants of His providence; so far as we know, the lowest of all intelligent beings, whose strength is weakness, and whose wisdom is folly. And, what is yet a more mortifying consideration, we have provoked this Almighty Power by our sins; have affronted His goodness, despised His counsel, and rebelled against His authority. III. THE INFLUENCE THIS AFFECTION WILL HAVE ON THE CONDUCT OF OUR LIVES. In general, the effect of this fear will be a sincere, universal obedience to the commands of God. The awe of His majesty will keep us from presumption, and the promises of His mercy from despair: for, as is His majesty, so is His mercy. If this principle were thoroughly fixed in the minds of men, we should be ashamed of hypocrisy, and tremble at profaneness; neither hope our treachery could escape the notice, nor our blasphemies the vengeance of God. This affection will give warmth to our zeal, and spirit to our devotion; will animate our faith, enliven our hope, and extend our charity; will deter us from sin, and encourage us in our duty. (J. Rogers, D.D.)

Vers. 10–12. **The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.**—*Providential deliverances from slavery.*—This psalm is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving upon the subject of God's works of creation and providence; and the author seems in his enumeration of the works of God to equal the wonders of Providence with those of Creation (ver. 6). Now the psalmist thus joins them together because of the deliverances that he and his people had experienced. And we as a nation have known like deliverances. 1. The providence of God presides over and governs all things, and has a peculiar influence upon all the great events that happen unto men. 2. This, as it is observable in all the great periods of every particular man's life, so it is more especially and remarkably true, in respect of such events, wherein the fates of whole nations and kingdoms are concerned. (S. Clarke, D.D.) *Divine and human purpose.*—The wicked meet with a large measure of success in this world. Their success, however, does little for them after all. It does not put them in possession of solid and lasting happiness, and this may be said to be their highest aim. Their power, moreover, is very limited at the best, and in all directions, and they are not longer lived than others. God has absolute power over them. He has so arranged, and so administers affairs, that we may describe them as circum-hedged. Neither singly nor collectively can creatures carry anything against the Divine will or power. "Counsel" or purpose may be defined—a decision or determination of the will; and purposes may be divided into good, bad, and indifferent. Practically, they may be so divided; and it is almost unnecessary to remark that good purposes never conflict with the purposes of God. He approves of them, and is on the side of all good purposes. It is bad purposes of which God disapproves, and in proportion to their inherent badness; but the badness of a purpose, let it be distinctly noted, is no proof that it clashes with the purposes of God. If it were, it would follow that not one bad purpose formed by man had ever been or could be executed; but what is the fact? Countless

millions of bad purposes have been successfully carried out, and are being carried out every day all over the world. Baffled they frequently are, but by no means always. Indeed, if we had our way, they would be baffled a great deal oftener; but God's thoughts and ways are not as our thoughts and ways. They are high above ours as heaven is above the earth. A young man, let us suppose, makes up his mind to rob his employer, and it is not long till the sinful purpose is put into execution. Query—What was God's relation to the purpose? With the utmost case God could have deprived him of the opportunity and the power to rob his employer. What God purposed was that, while disapproving of the purpose to rob, He would permit the execution of it, or not interfere by the exercise of His omnipotence to hinder its execution. Whenever the purpose of God crosses the line of human purposes, be they the purposes of one person, or any number of persons in combination, it presents an insuperable barrier—a barrier which can neither be swept away nor overleapt. As well may we essay to pluck a star from the firmament or dry up the bed of the sea, as essay to frustrate or modify or delay the fulfilment of the Divine purposes, for they are the purposes of a Being whose knowledge and power are absolute, and who can take these words into His mouth, "I am the Lord, I change not." (*G. Cron.*)

Ver. 11. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.*—*The immutability of God's counsels*:—Let us make some remarks. 1. UPON THE DIVINE COUNSELS GENERALLY. There are such, and they show—1. That God concerns Himself with our world. 2. They are of deliberation and wise purpose. Of the works of God in the material world we may indeed say, "In wisdom hast Thou made them all." How vast and orderly is the frame of the world! But in Nature, wonderful as are these operations, there is nothing to resist, to repel, to dispute. All are His servants, and every thing fulfils His word. He saith to one, Go, and it goeth; to another, Come, and it cometh. But in His moral kingdom we see a world in rebellion. There is not a principle naturally in our hearts, but it is a rebel principle also. Every affection, every will, is ready to start up in defiance, wrestling with His authority, and pursuing a course contrary to His commands. If His government were one of rigid justice only, there would be no difficulty here. But judgment is "His strange work," and mercy the delight of His administration. The counsel, in this case, is to make good triumph over evil, and evil itself the occasion of good. How adorable is that wisdom which, influenced by goodness, wins back a rebellious heart to love and obedience without violence to its freedom! which makes our very "wickedness to correct us, and our backslidings to reprove us!" and which, finally, although by the mysterious permission of evil, sin hath abounded, yet makes grace much more abound; so that, "as sin hath reigned unto death, even so doth grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord!" Well may we say, with St. Paul, when one branch of this great subject was before him, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" 3. They are supreme and uncontrollable. This it is which gives to good men so entire and joyful a confidence: "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." II. But our text calls us to consider THE STABILITY OF THE DIVINE COUNSELS. "They shall stand for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." We may illustrate this—1. By ancient instances of the fulfilment of delayed purposes. See the birth of Isaac, long promised, given at last. The promised seed of the woman—how long before that appeared. 2. The steadfastness of His holy law. He never swerves from it. Go to the right hand or to the left, and you fall not only into a sin, but into a peril or a misery. Other maxims deceive: His never. 3. The constant connection of painful fear and misery with sin. 4. The established order of human salvation. I see man in all ages a sinner and miserable. But there is hope for him. He was forgiven, and assured, and became both a justified and a holy man. Ages have since elapsed, but every pardoned and accepted sinner has been saved in the same way. (*R. Watson.*) *The counsel of the Lord*:—I. HOW BLESSED IS IT TO HAVE A PERSONAL REVELATION OF GOD IN THE CHARACTER OF HIS SON. His majesty and mercy are revealed in Christ, tested in honour and ignominy, in power and in pain. There is uniformity and radiance, a joy and rest to man in this revelation of God's character and counsel. II. NO KNOWLEDGE IS SO IMPORTANT AND SO PRACTICAL AS THAT OF GOD'S PLAN. None so personally, universally and eternally affects us. In this plan happiness is made to correspond with piety,



sorrow with sin, and the plan works with certainty; inexorable, yet simple. The force that binds the moon to the earth and the earth to Sirius is simple but sure. So in the sweep of the ages, God's truth standeth for ever and the thoughts of His heart to all generations. Eternity itself shall emphasize and illustrate it.

III. IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN WE MAY EXPECT SURPRISES TO US. The plan is eternal. We are of yesterday. You admire mosaic painting for the beauty of its tint, the free, flowing majesty and grace, the delicacy and beauty of its delineations. But should a child in the artist's studio take up a bit of ruby, turquoise, agate or pearl, and ask you what its relation was to the scene depicted—the Crucifixion or Resurrection perhaps—it might not be easy for you to explain its use, or mark its place till the master's work was complete. When Jerusalem was razed, the early Christians were surprised and alarmed. But that event led to the spread of the Gospel, just as the Jewish act of homicide and deicide instrumentally led to man's salvation. So each event in God's plan has its place as each capital and gargoyle has its fitting location in the cathedral.

(R. H. Storrs.) **The thoughts of His heart to all generations.**—*Divine thoughts*:—God thinks of us, and He intends that we in return should think of Him. And for us to do this rightly is true religion. What condescension and kindness are shown in God's thinking of us. "I know the thoughts that I have toward you that they are good and not evil." I. **THE NATURE OF GOD'S THOUGHTS.** All existence is the embodiment of God's thought, but it is only as He reveals His thoughts to us that we can form any conception of them. And He has done this. The Bible is the unfolding of God's thoughts to us as they bear on our recovery from bondage and sin. And every one desires to know what are God's thoughts upon our sin. The sense of guilt is universal. Now God tells us that His thoughts are set on our salvation. None but He could have introduced a plan of restoration like that which the Gospel brings. And His thought includes our regeneration and renewal as well as our forgiveness. For they include the promise of the Holy Ghost. How precious, then, are God's thoughts unto us. II. **THE PERMANENCE OF GOD'S COVENANT.** It "standeth for ever." (John Glanville.) *God's thoughts*:—I. **GOD HAS THOUGHTS.** 1. Independent—in their origin, character, manifestation. 2. Complete: they grasp the whole of a thing, and the whole of all things. 3. Unsuccessive: one thought does not start another, as in our case. 4. Harmonious. II. **GOD HAS THOUGHTS FOR HUMANITY.** Three things are necessary before humanity can get any benefit from his thoughts—1. God must reveal them. Unless He express them we shall never know them. 2. There must be a capacity to appreciate them. Without this capacity the revelation is useless. 3. There must be meditation. We cannot reach the great thoughts of a great man without study; how, then, can we expect to attain the thoughts of God without it? III. **GOD'S THOUGHTS FOR HUMANITY ARE PERMANENT.** 1. Because they embody absolute truths. They will always be what they are; they never can change. 2. Because they will ever be congruous with the moral nature. They are to the moral nature what air and water are to the body, fitted for it, and necessary to it. Without them it will die. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 12-14. **Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.**—*National uplifting*:—This text holds in its grasp the secret of our own national prosperity and superiority among the nations of the world—if we have such—and its teaching, if departed from by this nation, will cause our present glory to depart like the glory of ancient Rome, or Sidon, or Tyre. I. When the text states that the nation is blessed whose God is the Lord, and when we say to you that religion is the promoter of peace and prosperity, and the only foundation for our national permanence, the infidelity of our times and your knowledge of things suggest, that **THERE HAVE BEEN NATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN DESTROYED, AND THAT ARE NOW OPPRESSED BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGION.** Then let us carefully distinguish. There are many religions, but only one Christianity, and therefore we use the word religion; we use it because by general acceptance it has come to represent in our land and to our thoughts Christianity or the religion of Christ, and when we have drawn this distinction we must not forget that much that has come to the world in the name of Christianity is not of Christianity. You think of the cruelties, of the superstitions, and of the fanaticisms that are abroad in the world and doing their work in the name of religion, and you say, "These are not a blessing to the nation, these are a curse." Very true. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." While this is but another announcement that religion is the power that elevates and

blesses a nation, we will not forget that men in the past have gone forth armed with the civil sword, destroying all who doubted the truth of their systems; they have placed violence before demonstration, and have sought to establish the truth of religion as a Mohammed would establish the doctrine of the Koran. Spain and France and Italy, and Scotland and England, have each and all felt the power of the sword, the axe, and the torch in the name of religion. No, this is not the religion that blesses a nation. The religion that blesses the nation is forbearing to error and heresy; it is kind and patient and gentle; its grand characteristic is benevolence and fraternal love. II. In discussing the blessings that come to a nation by the acceptance of religion, blessings that can come through no other medium, I DO NOT MEAN TO SAY THAT THERE ARE NO INSTANCES OF THE GREAT ADVANCEMENT OF NATIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN REGULATED BY RELIGION. Infidelity is ever ready to point us to Egypt, to Persia, to Assyria, and to Old Greece and Rome, and say, "These were all great nations, prosperous nations, without your religion." This I readily acknowledge, but a careful study of the history of these nations will show that their false religions contained some principles of rectitude in common with our holy religion, and in the practice of these principles great prosperity came to them and continued with them until they departed from those principles; then did their power and their glory depart from them. Would you know the secret of Egypt's glory for ages and ages? "The father of history" tells us that such was the spirit of benevolence in Egypt that he who refused to assist the suffering when he had it in his power to do so was punished with death. When an Egyptian died a session was called to inquire how he had spent his life, so that true merit should have its full meed of public praise, and that all due respect might be paid to his memory. Her amusements were ordered for the strengthening of the bodies and the improvement of the minds of her subjects. Her proverbs called life a vanity, the homes of her people inns, in which they served to lodge for a night, and their sepulchres habitations in which they were to abide for ages. Do you wonder that Egypt became great? In Persia a falsehood—even a political falsehood—was considered in the most horrid light, and a liar was looked upon as the meanest and most disgraceful of men. Persia conferred favours on the nations she conquered, and left them to enjoy all the emblems of their former grandeur. She educated her children so wisely that they were taught virtue even as other children were taught letters, and grief was prohibited for such youths as were of sufficient strength and had reached proper years and yet died uneducated. Do you wonder that Persia became great? Rome in her best days bent all her energies for the general good, so that the best of everything was reserved for the public—temples, baths, highways, aqueducts—all looked toward the nation's good and the nation's glory, and were the most magnificent, while all things for the use of the individual citizen were plain and unpretentious. "A citizen of Rome who would present any product of the soil for sale that proved inferior to what he commended it to be, said citizen would lose his credit in all the marts in Rome and would lay himself liable to be whipped in the marketplace." And this law that applied to the products of the soil applied equally to all branches of trade. The motto was, "No citizen of Rome must in any way wrong his brother citizen." Do you wonder that Rome became great? It will be seen that these nations, though they did not make the Lord their God, and though they were nations with false religions, yet those false religions did contain some principles of righteousness in common with our holy religion, and these principles were the fountains of their success. III. THERE ARE SUPPOSED BLESSINGS, AND THERE IS A SHRINE OF DESIRED PROSPERITY THAT IS BETTER PROMOTED WITHOUT THAN WITH THE RELIGION MY TEXT COMMENDS. There are instances in which state crimes have been successful, and have been made the steps to worldly glory. There have been times when virtue was considered an obstacle to grandeur, when worldly heroes were exalted and tyrants were elevated; instances when wanton and arbitrary power marched with burning torch across the world and demanded of the peoples submission to a yoke of slavery that made them inferior to the beasts of the field. If such nations, such peoples, such rulers may be called blessed and prospered, they were obliged to ride over every principle of our holy religion to clasp that prosperity. IV. THE REASONS WHY THAT NATION IS BLESSED WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD WILL READILY APPEAR WHEN WE CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF SOCIETY IS BUILT. Is it necessary that the good of the many should be prepared before the interests of the few, and where private interests clash with the public good, the public good should prevail? Is it necessary for

the peace and prosperity of society that all the members of that society shall consider themselves naturally equal before the law, and that, without regard to country or colour, each shall receive the succour and protection that the law affords? Is it necessary that there should be sincerity between man and man lest deceit should serve for a veil to conceal the evil doings of the wicked from the eyes of the just? Is it necessary for the highest and best good of society that each member cultivate to the utmost his own talents and then seek to use those talents for the general good of the whole society? Then what shall so inculcate these principles as the religion my text commends? V. If we consider the various forms of government we shall find that EACH NATION WILL BE HAPPY OR MISERABLE IN ITS OWN MODE OF GOVERNING ACCORDING AS IT SHALL HAVE ACCEPTED OR REJECTED THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION. It requires more than a form of government; more than extensive territories; more than millions of population to make a strong, blessed and a happy nation. Some nations have committed the supreme power to one whom they call a monarch. Other nations have committed the supreme power to a few magistrates, senators or nobles. Other nations have committed or distributed the supreme power among all the members of society, and they talk of a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Each of these forms of government have their excellencies and their weaknesses; but each of them are a blessing or a curse in proportion as they accept or reject the principles of our holy religion. VI. WHATEVER ENTERS INTO AND CONSTITUTES THE BLESSING AND PROSPERITY OF A NATION IS CULTIVATED BY OUR HOLY RELIGION. Commerce will flourish, because the principles of religion hold back the man of business from rash speculations, which ruin families and destroy whole communities, and, in a wider application, bring to a whole nation what is known as "hard times." The men of business will possess such characters for truth-speaking and truth-dealing that general credit and confidence will be established, without which such a thing as commercial prosperity is not known. The mechanical arts will flourish, forasmuch as those who are prompted by religion will seek to improve all inventive genius for the welfare of the general public. All agricultural interests will flourish, and all mechanical appliances will lend arms of strength and hands of skill to the tillers of the soil, and the products of the soil will be all the richer, and the harvests all the more plenteous among that people who acknowledge that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." All the liberal arts and sciences will flourish, and all their blessings will be poured out upon the nation whose God is the Lord. Rhetoric will find its inspiration in the burning words and thoughts of prophet and psalmist. Painting will find inspiration in Moses' mountain view, in angelic visitors, in the judgment day, when assembled worlds will be gathered at the call of the King Eternal; and on the Mount of Transfiguration, where heavenly visitors talk with Jesus, and enraptured disciples desire to tarry. Sculpture will find inspiration in Moses, and it will breathe such life into the marble that Angelo's "Dead Christ" will make all beholders weep. Music will find inspiration in the subject of Creation, and of Elijah and of the Messiah. Haydn so sings to us of Creation that we are startled by the marching forth of worlds "when God says let there be worlds and there were worlds." Mendelssohn so sings to us of Elijah that we hear the rumble of the chariot of fire, and the clatter of the hoofs of the horses of fire, as up the way of light the deathless prophet is borne to the city of God. Handel so sings to us of the Messiah, of His sufferings and of His death, that the heart feels indeed that "He was bruised for our iniquities," etc. If success in commerce, in the mechanical arts, in agriculture, and in the liberal arts and sciences constitute a nation blessed, then are the nations blessed whose God is the Lord. (*W. Fawcett, D.D.*) *Religion a nation's true strength*:—Human society repose on religion. Civilization without it would be like the lights that play in the northern sky—a momentary flash on the face of darkness ere it again settled into eternal night. Wit and wisdom, sublime poetry and lofty philosophy cannot save a nation, else ancient Greece had never perished. Valour, law, ambition, cannot preserve a people, else Rome had still been mistress of the world. The nation that loses faith in God and man loses not only its most precious jewel, but its most unifying and conserving force. (*A. M. Fairbairn.*)

Ver. 15. **He fashioneth their hearts alike.**—*The moral identity of human hearts*:—"He fashioneth their hearts alike." All have certain instincts, passions, emotions with which conventional differences have nothing to do. "One touch

of Nature makes the whole world kin." I. GOD HATH FASHIONED OUR HEARTS ALIKE IN RESPECT OF THIS, THAT WE ARE ALL SELF-CONSCIOUS. I can think of myself as myself and no other—as one individual unit. I am myself a world, into which the great world cannot penetrate; and, in the light of my own consciousness, I am as effectually hidden as though I did not exist at all. And this does not break up the race. It unifies it. For it is the same with all. II. In close connection with this we must take THE MORAL SENSE, THAT IS, THE CONVICTION THAT SOME THINGS ARE RIGHT AND SOME WRONG. Take the rudest savage, one whose ideas as to what is right and what is wrong are all jumbled together; still he feels that there is a difference. In this also "God fashioneth our hearts alike." Its universality makes it the foundation of law, the approver of right, and the avenger of wrong, even when human law fails to detect the criminal. III. GOD HAS MADE US ALL FOR FRIENDSHIP, AFFECTION, MUTUAL DEPENDENCE AND MUTUAL HELP. God "setteth us in families." None of us, king or subject, prince or peasant, is sufficient for himself. The whole civilization and beneficence of the world have sprung from this objective character of man. Give a man nothing to do, and he is miserable. Give a man nothing to love, and he is miserable. IV. THIS OUTWARD SEEKING CAN NEVER BE FULLY SATISFIED WITH ANYTHING CREATED. In order to full satisfaction it must go forward and upward to God. It calls for the infinite. In this sense, too, God "hath fashioned our hearts alike." He has so made us that He Himself is necessary to us. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing," and not all the resources of this manifold world can fill the void in the human heart, and lead it to say—"It is enough." There is something unanswered still, and there ever will be till we rest in God. (A. L. Simpson, D.D.).

Vers. 18-20. Behold! the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.—*The eye of the Lord*:—"Behold!" It is a marked word in Scripture! Isaiah typifying the Christ that was to come, opens the glorious secret thus—"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth: I will put My spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles." And, when that despicable creature Pilate brought forth the glorious, the insulted, and the suffering Jesus, his word was—"Behold! the man." And so the Holy Ghost adopts this striking, telling word—"Behold!" to captivate the heart with that which follows; giving a faithful description of the church in her chequered state of exercise and trial in all ages. I. THE CHARACTER SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT—"them that fear Him." Do you fear God? Another character is, "THEM THAT HOPE IN HIS MERCY." Observe that word—"them that hope in His mercy." That is enough! That is Christianity! But hope set up in a broken heart! II. Upon all such is "THE EYE OF THE LORD." Is that eye on you? III. WHY THE EYE OF THE LORD IS UPON THEM—"to deliver their soul from death and to keep," etc. IV. THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE TEXT. (J. J. West, M.A.) *Special pleading with the specially feeble*:—See the opposite in the text—fear and hope. They seem to be contradictions, but yet here they are together. That is a blessed state in which fear keeps the door and hope spreads the table; fear the watch-dog without and hope the lamp within. Then that hope in the Lord's mercy may be the very least of His people, but they are His people, for His eye is upon them. Now, to those whose sole hope is hope in God's mercy, we would say—I. THIS HOPE IS ONE, AND ONLY ONE. Let me ask—1. Have you any hope in your own character? At once he replies, "None at all." Now this is well, humbling as the admission is. O, self-truster, you are a living insult to the Cross of Christ. 2. Have you any hope in external ordinances? 3. Have you any trust in the priesthood of man? 4. In scientific discoveries? Now, to all these questions the answer is clear and explicit. He has no trust in them at all, but in Christ only. Then—II. THAT THIS HOPE IN CHRIST HAS GOOD FOUNDATIONS. I rejoice in your sense of sin, but I lament your doubts of pardon; for consider—1. The merciful character of God. His very name is love. And—2. There is a gospel. There is forgiveness for the greatest sin. The very word "gospel" is full of the greatest hope for man. 3. Think of the life of the Lord Jesus here on earth. Did He ever reject any who came to Him? 4. And of the Holy Spirit. He is provided to meet all your difficulties. And—5. We may pray. It would be a wicked hoax if a man invited poor people to his house to receive charity, and then, when they came there, denied them relief. God does not deal with us so. 6. And how many have come to Christ and been moved by Him? I am one of them. I do not think that you are any worse

than I was. III. **THIS HOPE MAY BE YOURS.** Let me try to chase away objections. "Oh," say you, "I have been guilty of the worst of sins." In the case of certain of you I do not believe it. You have enough to answer for without blackening yourself needlessly. But worse sinners than you have come to Christ. And may there not be a spice of rebellion against God in your humility, a little sullenness in it? Don't put away Christ from you out of a proud despair. Accept His mercy as a commonplace sinner. And what good do you think your death, if He leaves you to perish, as you think He will, will do Him? And suppose, after all, you are one of His chosen, and that He has loved you all along, is it not sad that you should not love and trust him. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

**Vers. 20-22. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.**—*Waiting for the Lord*.—I. THE SUBJECT OF THE EXERCISE—"our soul." Not our souls, but "our soul." Believers are said to be "of one soul." Drops of water brought into contact will run into one. So with the souls of God's people. II. THE EXERCISE ITSELF—waiting for the Lord. It includes conviction, desire, hope, patience. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN—"He is our help and our shield." 1. Their help. They need aid, and know their need. 2. Their shield, to defend from all the power of the adversary both from without and within. (W. Jay.) *A description of true worship*.—I. WAITING ON THE LORD FOR A GOOD REASON (ver. 20). 1. Waiting upon Him implies faith—faith in His existence; desire, a craving after some good; patience, biding His own good time. But how are you to wait on Him? (1) Wholly. He must be waited upon in every event, purpose, action, and place. True worship is an all-pervading spirit, not an occasional feeling or service. (2) Lovingly. It cannot be done perfunctorily or formally. (3) Constantly. It is spirit running through the life, giving unity, meaning, and worth to existence. 2. Such is the waiting but what is the good reason? "He is our help and our shield." A "shield." If He be for us, who can be against us? God is our refuge and strength. A "help." Life's labours are arduous, life's trials are heavy: He is the only effective helper in both. We will wait, therefore, on Him. II. REJOICING IN THE LORD FOR A GOOD REASON (ver. 21). 1. True worship is joy—the only satisfactory and lasting joy of a moral intelligence. It is a rejoicing in His—(1) Works. (2) Government. (3) Character. (4) Fatherhood. (5) Promises. What is the good reason for rejoicing? "Because we have trusted in His holy name." All joy is the fruit of that tree that is rooted in an unbounded confidence in God. All the streams that "make glad the city of our God" rise out of a settled faith in Him. III. PRAYING TO THE LORD FOR A GOOD REASON (ver. 22). 1. Were we innocent sufferers, we should pray for justice, not mercy; but we are sinful, and mercy is what we require: mercy to pardon, to cleanse, and to qualify us for the high service and fellowship of the Holy One. 2. What is the good reason for this prayer? "According as we hope in Thee." We pray because our confidence is in Thee, and our expectation is from Thee. Men would never pray without this hope in God, and the compass of the prayer is measured by the expanse of this hope. We ask for little because our faith and hope are feeble. (Homilist.)

## PSALM XXXIV.

**Vers. 1-22. I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**—*A devout hymn*.—I. AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF TRUE PRAISE. 1. It is thorough. (1) There is no praise without concentration of soul. (2) Distracting forces are rife. 2. It is constant. (1) In every department of action—intellectual, artistic, commercial, political. (2) In every circumstance of life—sorrow, joy, adversity, prosperity, bereavement, friendship. 3. It is exultant. God is the sum total of all excellence, the primal fount of all joy; therefore let us boast in Him. 4. It is social. The true worshipper becomes magnetic; he draws others to the shrine before which he falls. II. A REASON FOR TRUE PRAISE. 1. Past deliverance (ver. 4). (1) He had been "delivered out of all his troubles."

His troubles were great in their variety, number, but he was delivered. (2) He had been delivered out of all his troubles by prayer. "I sought the Lord," etc. 2. Constant protection (ver. 7). (*Homilist.*) *Blessing the Lord*:—I. A RESOLUTION TO BLESS THE LORD, or to thank the Lord. 1. The things for which we ought to bless or thank the Lord: temporal; spiritual; personal; family; national; and Christian. 2. Whom we are to bless: "the Lord," the Giver of all; no mercy, except from Him; gives freely; bounteously, always. 3. When we are to bless the Lord:—"at all times." II. A RESOLUTION TO PRAISE THE LORD. 1. This is a resolution which Nature even approves. "All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord." 2. A resolution which reason sustains. 3. A resolution which Scripture examples encourage. 4. A resolution which is in analogy with the customs of social life. 5. A resolution which accords with our obligation. 6. A resolution which harmonizes with the employment of the heavenly inhabitants. 7. A resolution which, if carried out, will contribute much to life's happiness, and promote the glory of God in our spheres of action. (*J. Bate.*)

Ver. 2. **My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.**—*Rightful boasting*:—We all are prone to boast, and often on very slender grounds. The worst are they who boast of their own goodness. We are to glory only in the Lord. Now such rightful boasting includes the elevation of joyous feeling, and the breaking forth of gratitude and praise. And the humble shall hear thereof. Others would tell them, or, if not, the psalmist himself would. Spiritual sadness seeks seclusion, but not so spiritual freedom and joy. Like the return of health and of day, it says to the prisoners, "Go forth"; to them that are in darkness, "Show yourselves." And the effect of this knowledge would be to make them glad. The Lord's followers are supposed to be mopish and melancholy; but they have a thousand sources of joy which others know not of. (*W. Jay.*) *On glorying in God alone*:—What can better become us, who are the creatures of God, than to bless Him, and depend on Him? What can better become us, as Christians, than to be always praising and magnifying that God, to whose grace we owe our salvation and happiness? I. THE EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENT PERSONS (Jer. ix. 23, 24; 1 Cor. i. 29-31). St. Paul himself was an eminent example of his own doctrine; for when, to vindicate himself, he found himself obliged to recount what he had done and suffered in the cause of Christianity, together with his endowments, graces and privileges, he begs pardon for it, calls it the foolishness of boasting, and as nothing less could excuse it, he pleads necessity for it (2 Cor. xi. 20). But this apostle, who was thus shy of glorying in his excellencies and advantages, lest he should seem too tender of his own honour, how forward he is to record his infirmities, that he might advance God's (2 Cor. xii. 9). We cannot be Christians unless God be all in all to us; unless we look upon Him as the source and spring of all good, the object of our joy and glory, and the ultimate end of our desires and hopes. II. WE HAVE RECEIVED ALL FROM HIM. Whether natural endowments, or worldly possessions, all that we are born to, and all that we acquire, judgment, courage, wit, eloquence, wealth, power, favour, and the like, we certainly owe to God. And if we derive all from God, acknowledgment and praise is the least sacrifice we can make Him. III. We depend so entirely upon God, that we can reap little benefit, nay, we may suffer much prejudice by the most excellent endowments and possessions, unless they be sanctified by His grace, and befriended by His providence (Eccles. ix. 11). How naturally do riches breed luxury! power tyranny! honour insolence! favour and applause vanity! IV. TO BOAST IN ANYTHING BUT GOD IS A SYMPTOM OF EXTREME PROFANENESS AND IRRELIGION; for whence can this proceed, but from an understanding darkened by ignorance or infidelity, or from a heart alienated from God, and possessed by some vile idol? V. The heathen thought that there was an envious demon, whose peculiar province it was to cast down the vainglorious and insolent; but we Christians are taught that to HUMBLE THE PROUD IS A WORK THAT GOD DELIGHTS IN (Isa. ii. 12; James iv. 6). And why does God take pleasure in this? To assert His sovereignty and dominion, to imprint an awe of His power upon the minds of mankind, and to extort from the proudest and vainest of mortals a confession of their meanness and His majesty. VI. MARKS BY WHICH WE MAY EXAMINE OURSELVES IN REFERENCE TO THIS MATTER. 1. If we have grateful hearts towards God, we shall let slip no occasion which invites us to praise and honour Him. Not only those things that are new and surprising, that are unusual or extraordinary, but

also the common and ordinary works of God, and His constant and daily benefits, will affect our hearts with a devout and thankful remembrance of Him. 2. If we truly glory in the Lord, and in nothing else, our admiration and reverence, our love and gratitude will discover themselves, not only in our words, but in our actions. The principle which causes us to be humble and thankful towards God, will keep us from being disrespectful and insolent towards man; and, in general, we shall think it our duty, not only to glorify God by praise and thanksgiving, but also and especially by a right use and employment of His benefits and mercies. 3. The practice of this duty does by degrees advance us to a settled state of pleasure. What can be more delightful than the exercise of love, when the object of it is most perfect? (Ps. lxxiii. 4, 5, 6). (R. Lucas, D.D.)

Vers. 3-7. **O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.**—A testimony meeting:—"God's praises sound best in concert." The praise that lifts its voice in solitude is beautiful, but it is far more beautiful when heard in communion with the praise of one's fellows. Each instrument in the orchestra is enriched by the co-operation of the others. Each member in a chorus has his discernment sharpened, and his zeal intensified by the remaining members. So in the orchestra of praise. My own thanksgiving is quickened and enriched when I join it to the praises of others. The text appears to suggest that a number of thankful souls gathered together, and, each contributing his own testimony of the exceeding graciousness of God, they joined in an outburst of united and jubilant praise. Here is one of the testimonies: "I sought the Lord," etc. And here is the glad some confession of quite a numerous company. "They looked unto Him and were lightened," etc. And here, again, is the witness of an inspired and grateful soul: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him," etc. 1. He was burdened with "fears." What did he make his resource? "I sought the Lord." The seeking was a real business. Into the inquisition he put his whole soul. And what was the issue of the search? "He heard me." The term implies heeding and responding. Man's "seeking" was responded to by a sympathetic movement on the part of God. "And delivered me," etc. That is a full-coloured word, abounding in strength and vitality. It suggests the act of rescuing something out of a beast's mouth. It is from spiritual havoc of this kind that our Lord delivers us. The rescue is not partial. The relief is by no means incomplete. The freedom is absolute. "He delivered me from all my fears." "God sweeps the field, slays the enemies, and even buries their bones." 2. Let us listen to the second of these grateful testimonies. "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." The gracious answer of God brought a benediction of light. They "were lightened." Then before they must have been darkened. They were cheerless and depressed. They were "losing heart." "They looked unto Him." They gazed intently upon God. No snatch look, no hurried glances, no passing nod of recognition. A fixed and eager gaze. And what was the outcome of their gaze? They "were lightened." They were brightened up, lit up, made cheerful. "Now are ye light in the Lord." Depression gave way to buoyancy. Melancholy yielded to cheerfulness. 3. Let us now turn to the third of these witnesses, and hear his thankful confession. "This poor man cried," etc. What had been this man's peculiar burden? "Troubles." He had been in a "tight corner," a "tight place." In his straits he "cried unto the Lord." It was a short, sharp, urgent prayer. "Fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer; an arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore the prayers of saints are expressed by crying in Scripture." Again we have the confession made by an earlier witness. "The Lord heard him," paid heed to him, and began the ministry of gracious response. "He saved him out of all his troubles." He opened a way out of the tight place. He led him out of straits into freedom. He gave him a sense of space. "Thou hast brought my feet into a large place." (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) A thanksgiving sermon:—I. WHAT IT IS TO MAGNIFY THE LORD, AND EXALT HIS NAME. Let us not mistake in arrogating to ourselves that which is quite out of our reach, as if we, diminutive bits of God's creation, could enrich the exchequer of heaven. No, 'tis not at all in Himself, but only in our own minds, and others' esteem, that we are capable of greatening and advancing the most glorious and ever-blessed God. When we conceive in ourselves any worthy sentiments, becoming the Divine majesty and goodness; are filled with an admiring sense of His transcendent excellencies, and a grateful sense of His loving-kindness: and endeavour, all we can, to propagate the same

magnificent and fair idea to others: this is the utmost whereof we are capable, to glorify God in such aggrandizing representations, as show Him somewhat like Himself. And thus we do magnify the God infinitely good, when we stand in admiration of such benignity, that we should have any comfort with our lives, when we have done so much to spoil all with our sins! Yea, that not a minute should pass but brings us a new favour from above; and gives us more assurance still that He desires our felicity, and cannot design our ruin. Thinking thus well of God, we do magnify the Lord, and exalt His name. II. THE PROPERTIES OF THIS EUCHARISTICAL SACRIFICE, AND HOW WE ARE TO OFFER IT. 1. It must be with the soul, from the altar of a sensible heart. To glory in Him is one way of giving glory to Him. 2. Though it must not be only a lip-service, we must not refrain our lips either. When our bodies are His temple, and our tongues the living bells articulately to sound His praise; how can we better employ the speaking faculty, than in celebrating His goodness that gave it? What we are transported with, we can hardly forbear to speak of, if we are full of it, 'tis apt to float on our tongues: and if the mercies of God affect our hearts, 'tis fit we should express the same, both to discharge a due debt ourselves, and also to kindle the like flame in others. 3. We must bless the Lord at all times (ver. 1); not only by fits, as it pleases us, or when extorted from us upon some occasions extraordinary, but with such a heart whose pulse may be His praise. Our holy living is the most effectual thanksgiving. When we justify the Divine laws by our obedience, and thus stand up to attest their high reasonableness and goodness, instead of repining at them as hard sayings and heavy burdens; showing that really we do admire and applaud them for the blessed products of an infinite wisdom and love, to contrive and effect our everlasting happiness: then do we give them the best commendation, to make all enamoured with those sacred institutions, which they not only hear set off in hollow encomiums, but see produce such happy effects (John xv. 8; Phil. i. 11). III. THE REASON WE HAVE THUS TO MAGNIFY THE LORD, AND EXALT HIS NAME. 1. It is the very end of our being. Man, as the priest of this inferior creation, is to offer up a general sacrifice in the name and behalf of all the rest; who in their several ways give a tacit consent, and (as it were) say Amen to the oblation: and when dumb and negligent to praise the Lord, we not only wrong ourselves, but rob multitudes that would do it, had they but our faculties and abilities to reason and express it. We not only stand for cyphers, but carry as an exorbitant rout, breaking our ranks and disordering the world, if we celebrate not His praise who has so set us up. 2. We have not only capacity, but all manner of obligations to it; even common justice binds us to render to all their dues. Well may we extol Him, when He has done so for us (Ps. xxx. 1). How many great luminaries else soever there be, all disappear at the rising sun; and all other benefactors must be even nullified to omnify the Supreme. 3. As we are obliged, so by the goodness of it encouraged to it (Ps. cxlvii. 1). "It is pleasant, and praise is comely." It gives the pious soul a sweet satisfaction, like the pleasure which an honest man takes in paying his debts. The most delicious viands are not more grateful to a healthy body, than the praises of God are to a well-affected soul. This raises us even into heaven aforehand, to anticipate the anthems of the celestial choir. And how great is that honour, to be taken up in the work of angels! How much for our own praise to praise Him, that has given us both matter and hearts for it! (B. Jenks.)

Ver. 4. *I sought the Lord, and He heard me.—The reasonableness of prayer:—I. WHAT THE HEAD, LEFT TO ITSELF, THINKS ABOUT PRAYER.* The head, discerning only the externality of it, sees man, the creature, venturing to go into the presence of Jehovah the Creator, and ask to have just what he may wish for. That is "prayer" as many seem to apprehend it. And the apprehension is so limited, and so imperfect, we cannot wonder it should occasion difficulty. Half the trouble is gone when we have worthily stated what prayer is. It is the act of acknowledged dependence. To connect every thought with the thought of God. To look on everything as His work and appointment. To submit every wish, thought, and resolve, to Him. That is prayer. And if that be the essence and life of prayer, and we can lay firm hold of it, then we are lifted into a serene region of calm, above the tempest that rages over such things as the possibilities of answer, and the relation of prayer to law. What does the head say about prayer? It says—1. Prayer is not unreasonable. Admit that there is a God



on whom we are all dependent, and every one will be found willing to acknowledge that no act is more proper and reasonable than that in which we seek Divine favour and blessing. The Theist, who prides himself on the guidance of reason, speaks eloquently of prayer. 2. The head is fully willing to recognize the fact that, in all ages, and in all climes, men have been moved by the impulse to prayer. Everywhere man has felt the presence of One higher than himself, and has turned yearning eyes toward Him. 3. The head finds no serious objection to urge against the abstract statement that God can hear and answer prayer. If He be God indeed, and if He did create us, reason can find no ground for denying that, in His Divine arrangements, God may consider the feelings and wishes of His creatures, as well as their positive needs. The matter of prayer may be presented so that our minds cannot but find serious objections and difficulties. Sometimes it seems to be expected that by prayer we may change the order of the outward universe. We have even seen statements which assume that prayer is the means by which "our wish determines God's will." Against either of these representations the head properly stumbles. II. **WHAT THE HEAD, GUIDED BY THE HEART, THINKS ABOUT PRAYER.** The text is a heart-inspired utterance. The heart-guided head says—1. If God be a Father He must be a prayer-hearer. If He does not, He cannot be true to His name. Fatherhood pledges fatherly interest. It is the most simple and necessary thing that we, as children, should pray. It is the essential of His relation to us that God our Father should hear. 2. If God has promised, He surely knows how to perform. 3. The heart-guided head learns to set prayer in its proper limitations. 4. And, listening to all the objections urged against prayer, it quietly but firmly replies, "You cannot argue me out of the facts and experiences of my life. This I know, 'I sought the Lord, and He heard me'; and I shall go on praying, for I have proved the power of prayer." It is enough. We believe in the power of prayer. We see the glory of a praying life. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*)

**Ver. 5. They looked unto Him and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.**—*Good authority for a good hope.*—How low, oftentimes, has been the condition of the people of God! See the lamentations of Jeremiah. But he and all God's saints have looked unto God and were lightened. Consider—I. **THEIR EXPECTATION.** "They looked unto Him." They did so under—1. The deluge of sin. This universal; none ever escaped it. "We are all under sin." 2. The deluge of death. 3. Jehovah's eternal wrath. None, by and of themselves, can escape either. But Jesus said, "Lo, I come," and He hath rolled back the waters of each, for all them that look to Him. 4. Bondage. Israel was in bondage, and so are God's people now. But the Lord has promised to deliver them. "The sighing of the prisoners" comes before Him, and He preserves those that "are appointed to die." The sins of our nature are hard task-masters. II. **CONFIRMATION.** They "were lightened" in mind and in soul. Let us then rejoice in our religion, and we shall never be ashamed. (*James Wells.*) *Looking unto Jesus:*—From the connection we are to understand the pronoun "Him" as referring to the word "Lord" in the preceding verse. "They looked unto the Lord Jehovah, and were lightened." But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as He is in Himself, and found any comfort in Him, for "our God is a consuming fire." The only way in which we can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ. I. **First, LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE.** Here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him. In the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribulation. One glimpse at Him may well suffice for all our toils while on the road. Cheered by His voice, nerved by His strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as He did, to the death. We trust that those of you who are weary Christians will not forget to "look unto Him, and be lightened." II. **Come, then, poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints—COME YE NOW TO CALVARY'S CROSS.** Certain I am, that if we lived more with Jesus, were more like Jesus, and trusted more to Jesus, doubts and fears would be very scarce. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened." III. **And now I invite you to a glorious scene—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.** You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives. There are others under the constant fear of death. Come, come, behold Jesus Christ risen! For remember, this is a great truth—"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." IV. **LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN.** You are wrestling

with spiritual onomies; you are at war to-day, and mayhap the enemy has thrust sore at you, and you have been ready to fall; it is a marvel to you that you have not turned like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror, and so shall you be. V. "LOOK UNTO HIM, AND BE LIGHTENED." See thore He sits in heaven, He has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God for ever making intercession for us. Like a great high priest of old, He stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in His mien, for He is no moan, cringing suppliant. If thou dost not succeed, He will; if thy intercession be unnoticed, His cannot be passed away. Oh! be of good cheer, continue still thy supplication. "Look unto Him, and be lightened." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 6, 7. **This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.**—*Supernatural factor in prayer*.—The most dangerous doctrine concerning prayer is that current philosophy of the matter which presents a half-truth only; allowing the subjective value, but denying all objective efficacy to prayer—i. e. admitting a benefit, as attached to a devout habit, but limiting the benefit to the working of natural results entirely within the suppliant. The text affirms a positive advantage in prayer. Jehovah is represented as hearing prayer and interposing to save the suppliant. And the idea is further expanded by a reference to the deliverances wrought by the "Lord's angel." To a Jew, the angel of the Lord was a historic reality, working supernatural signs and wonders all through that wonderful career of the chosen people of God. When such events as these can be explained by natural causes, by self-scrutiny, self-conquest and self-culture, then prayer may be brought down to the level of natural philosophy and moral philosophy. But, until then, there must remain in this mystery a supernatural factor. The Waldenses are the Israel of the Alps, who, in their mountain fastnesses, for centuries guarded the ark of primitive faith and worship, while the terrors of the Vatican confronted them—that summit of terror which was "an Olympus for its false gods, a Sinai for its thunders, and a Calvary for its blood." Read the story of the siege of La Balsille, their mountain fortress. Hemmed in by the French and Sardinian army through the summer, gaunt famine stared them in the face; the foe guarded every outlet of the valley, and their ungathered crops lay in the fields. In midwinter, driven by gnawings of hunger to visit the abandoned harvest fields, beneath the deep snows they found God had kept the grain unharmed, and part of it was gathered in good condition, a year and a half after it was sown! In the following spring a merciless cannonade broke down the breastworks behind which they hid, and the helpless band cried to the Lord. At once He who holds the winds in His fist, and rides in the clouds as a chariot, rolled over them a cloak of fog so dense that in the midst of their foes they escaped unseen! The power of prayer is the perpetual sign of the supernatural. Jonathan Edwards may be taken as an example of thousands. From the age of ten years, his prayers were astonishing both for the faith they exhibited and the results they secured. With the intellect of a cherub and the heart of a seraph, we can neither distrust his self-knowledge nor his absolute candour. His communion with God was so rapturous, that the extraordinary view of the glory of the Son of God, His pure, sweet love and grace, would overcome him so that for an hour he would be flooded with tears, weeping aloud. Prayer brought him such power as Peter at Pentecost scarcely illustrates more wonderfully. For instance, his sermon at Enfield, on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which, delivered without a gesture, nevertheless produced such effect that the audience leaped to their feet and clasped the pillars of the meeting-house lest they should slide into perdition. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Put Him to the test of experimental prayer and you shall need no testimony from another to establish your faith in the supernatural answers to prayer. His providence will guide your doubting steps like that glorious pillar of cloud and fire, and in that last great crisis when heart and flesh fail, and the valley and shadow of death is before you, the everlasting Arms shall be beneath you, and your refuge the Eternal God! (A. T. Pierson, D.D.) *The poor man's poverty, prayer, and preservation*.—I. **THE POOR MAN'S POVERTY.** "This poor man." 1. It was not the poverty of social dependence. David, the writer of this Psalm, was a king; governed a great nation; ruled a people of noble history; had vast resources; had numerous friends—therefore the designation of the text cannot refer to his temporal position. The fact is that our social position is no index to our real wealth or poverty. A man financially rich, may be morally poor. A man morally rich, may be financially poor. 2. It

was not the poverty of intellectual weakness. David was not poor in mind. Not merely was he a king in position, but also in the empire of thought. His mind contained great ideas of God, of the soul, of life as a probation, of the future as a destiny. The lack of mental thought and energy is no aid to prayer. Converse with God requires great ideas. The language of want is simple; but it is full of meaning. Hence David was not poor in this respect. 3. It was not the poverty of spiritual indolence. David was not a moral pauper. He had not only a great soul, but it was well peopled with all that was noble and true. Faith in God was the governing influence of his soul. He loved the house of God. He delighted in the works of God. He was attached to the people of God. His religious experience was rich. His devotion was poetic. His soul was ever occupied with eternal realities. He was not poor in this respect. 4. It was the poverty of deep and true humility. He says, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord" (ver. 2). The humble soul is always poor in faith, in spiritual aspiration, in moral service, in benevolent dispositions, in its own estimation. Herein consists His benediction—"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of God." The poverty of humility is not assumed, it is not canting, it is not self-depreciative; but it is silent, it is reverent. II. THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER. "This poor man cried." Humiliation is a good preparation for prayer. It most feels the need of devotion. It is the most easily taught the meaning of worship. It is the most persevering in its exercise. 1. The poor man's prayer was emphatic. It was a cry. David knew what he wanted. He was decided and vigorous in the articulation of his soul-wants. God allows in prayer the required emphasis of a needy but penitent spirit. It is not presumption. 2. The poor man's prayer was earnest. It was a cry. Not a cold request. Not a calm inquiry. The more a man feels his need, the more deeply does He express it. 3. The poor man's prayer was continuous. It was the habit of his soul rather than a transient act. Prayer should not be a momentary effort of the Christian life, but the natural communion of the soul with God, as speech is the easy and constant medium of communication with men. 4. The poor man's prayer was thoughtful and reasonable. It was presented to the rightful object of devotion, in a thoughtful spirit. David did not doubt the fitness of prayer to save from trouble—(1) Personal. (2) Domestic. (3) Commercial. (4) National. Are the sceptics of our day wiser, better, happier than he? 5. The poor man's prayer was successful. III. THE POOR MAN'S PRESERVATION. "And the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his trouble." 1. His preservation was associated with prayer. "And the Lord heard him." 2. His preservation was secured by Divine agency. 3. His preservation was comprehensive and effectual. "And saved him out of all his trouble." Learn: 1. Humility is the best qualification for prayer, and the most likely guarantee of favourable response. 2. That God is the helper of troubled souls. 3. That men in the highest stations of life need prayer. (*J. S. Ezell, M.A.*) *A poor man's cry, and what came of it.*—I. THE NATURE AND THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER. 1. It is a dealing with the Lord. The best prayer is that which comes to closest grips with the God of mercy. 2. Prayer takes various shapes. (1) Seeking is prayer (ver. 4). (2) Looking unto God is prayer (ver. 5). If you cannot find words, it is often a very blessed thing to sit still, and look towards the hills whence cometh our help. (3) Tasting is a high kind of prayer (ver. 8), for it ventures to take what it asks for. (4) Frequently, according to our text, prayer is best described as a cry. 3. Prayer is heard in heaven. 4. It wins answers from God. More than forty years I have tried my Master's promise at the mercy-seat, and I have never yet met with a repulse from Him. In the name of Jesus I have asked and received; save only when I have asked amiss. It is true I have had to wait, because my time was ill-judged, and God's time was far better; but delays are not denials. Never has the Lord said to me, or to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye My face" in vain. II. THE RICHNESS AND FREEDOM OF DIVINE GRACE. 1. You will see the richness and the freedom of grace, when you consider the character of the man who prayed: "this poor man cried." Who was he? (1) He was a poor man; how terribly poor I cannot tell you. There are plenty of poor men about. If you advertised for a poor man in London, you might soon find more than you could count in twelve months: the supply is unlimited, although the distinction is by no means highly coveted. No man chooses to be poor. (2) He was also a troubled man, for the text speaks of "all his troubles"—a great "all," I warrant you. (3) He was a mournful man; altogether broken down. (4) He was a changed man. (5) He was a

hopeful man. Despair is dumb; where there is a cry of prayer, there is a crumb of comfort. 2. If you desire further to see the richness and freeness of grace, I beg you to remember the character of the God to whom this poor man cried. He who prayed was poor, and his prayer was poor; but he did not pray to a poor God. This poor man was powerless; but he did not cry to a feeble God. This poor man was empty; but he went to God's fulness. He was unworthy; but he appealed to God's mercy. Our God delighteth in mercy; He waiteth to be gracious; He takes pleasure in blessing the weary sons of men. 3. While we are thinking of the freeness and richness of this grace in the text, I would have you notice the character of the blessing. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." His sins were his great troubles; the Lord saved him out of them all through the atoning sacrifice. The effects of sin were another set of grievous troubles to him; the Lord saved him out of them all by the renewal of the Holy Ghost. He had troubles without and within, troubles in the family and in the world, and he felt ready to perish because of them; but the Lord delivered him out of them all. III. THE NEED AND THE USEFULNESS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY. Testimony is a weighty thing for the persuasion and winning of men; but it must be of the right kind. It should be personal, concerning things which you yourself know: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Never mind if you should be charged with being egotistical. That is a blessed egoism which dares to stand out and bear bold witness for God in its own person. "This poor man cried"; not somebody over the water—"and the Lord heard him," not a man down the next street. The more definite and specific your testimony, the better and the more convincing. I do not say that we can all tell the date of our conversion: many of us cannot. But if we can throw in such details, let us do so; for they help to make our testimony striking. Our witness should be an assured one. We must believe, and therefore speak. Do not say, "I hope that I prayed; and I—I—trust that the Lord heard me." Say, "I prayed, and the Lord heard me." Give your testimony cheerfully. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Do not say it as if it were a line from "the agony column"; but write it as a verse of a psalm. Your testimony must have for its sole aim the glory of God. Do not wish to show yourself off as an interesting person, a man of vast experience. We cannot allow the grace of God to be buried in ungrateful silence. When He made the world the angels sang for joy, and when He saves a soul we will not be indifferent. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The language of a cry*:—This poor man did not make a grand oration; he took to crying. 1. He was short: it was only a cry. In great pain a man will cry out; he cannot help it, even if he would. A cry is short, but it is not sweet. It is intense, and painful, and it cannot be silenced. We cry because we must cry. This poor man cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is not a long collect, but it collects a great deal of meaning into a few words. That was a short cry, "Lord save, or I perish"; and that other, "Lord, help me." "Save, Lord," is a notable cry, and so is "Lord, remember me." Many prevailing prayers are like cries because they are brief, sharp, and uncontrollable. 2. A cry is not only brief, but bitter. A cry is a sorrowful thing; it is the language of pain. It would be hard for me to stand here and imitate a cry. No; a cry is not artificial, but a natural production: it is not from the lips, but from the soul, that a man cries. A cry, attended with a flood of tears, a bitter wail, a deep-fetched sigh—these are prayers that enter into the ears of the Most High. O penitent, the more thou sorrowest in thy prayer, the more wings thy prayer has towards God! A cry is a brief thing, and a bitter thing. 3. A cry has in it much meaning, and no music. You cannot set a cry to music. The sound grates on the ear, it rasps the heart, it startles, and it grieves the minds of those who hear it. Cries are not for musicians, but for mourners. Can you expound a child's cry? It is pain felt, a desire for relief naturally expressed, a longing forcing itself into sound; it is a plea, a prayer, a complaint, a demand. It cannot wait, it brooks no delay, it never puts off its request till to-morrow. A cry seems to say, "Help me now! I cannot bear it any longer. Come, O come, to my relief!" When a man cries, he never thinks of the pitch of his voice; but he cries out as he can, out of the depths of his soul. Oh, for more of such praying! 4. A cry is a simple thing. The first thing a new-born child does is to cry; and he usually does plenty of it for years after. You do not need to teach children to cry: it is the cry of Nature in distress. All children can cry; even those who are without their reasoning faculties can cry. Yea, even the

beast and the bird can cry. If prayer be a cry, it is clear that it is one of the simplest acts of the mind. God loves natural expressions when we come before Him. Not that which is fine, but that which is on fire, He loves. Not that which is dressed up, but that which leaps out of the soul just as it is born in the heart. He delights to receive. This poor man did not do anything grand, but from his soul he cried. 5. A cry is as sincere as it is simple. Prayer is not the mimicry of a cry, but the real thing. You need not ask a man or woman, when crying, "Do you mean it?" Could they cry else? A true cry is the product of a real pain, and the expression of a real want; and therefore it is a real thing. (*Ibid.*) *Testimony to the power of prayer:*—One person says, "I cried to the Lord, and He heard me." "But," says an objector, "that is a special case." Up rises a second witness, and says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." "Well, that is only two; and two instances may not prove a rule." Then, up rises a third, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and in each case it is the same story—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Surely he must be hardened in unbelief who refuses to believe so many witnesses. I remember the story of a lawyer, a sceptic, who attended a class-meeting where the subject was similar to our theme of this morning. He heard about a dozen tell what the Lord had done for them; and he said, as he sat there, "If I had a case in court, I should like to have these good people for witnesses. I know them all, they are my neighbours, they are simple-minded people, straightforward and honest, and I know I could carry any case if I had them on my side." Then he very candidly argued that what they all agreed upon was true. He believed them in other matters, and he could not doubt them in this, which was to them the most important of all. He tried religion for himself, and the Lord heard him; and very soon he was at the class-meeting, adding his witness to theirs. (*Ibid.*) *The angel of the Lord encampeth . . . and delivereth.*—*Portrait of a good man:*—I. As Divinely AFFECTED. "They that fear him." The good man is one that fears God. II. As Divinely GUARDED. 1. Individually. God regards individuals, as well as nations, worlds, and systems. 2. Completely. Guards the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. 3. Eternally. Through time, in death, for ever, "He encampeth round about him." III. As Divinely DELIVERED. "And delivereth them." 1. From physical evils. Infirmities, diseases, death. 2. From intellectual evils. Errors, prejudices, ignorance. 3. From social evils. The bereavements of death, the disappointments of hypocritical friendships. 4. From spiritual evils. Impurity of heart, remorse of conscience, conflict of soul. (*Homilist.*) *The encamping angel:*—If we accept the statement in the superscription of this psalm, it dates from one of the darkest hours in David's life. His fortunes were never lower than when he fled from Gath, the city of Goliath, to Adullam. He never appears in a less noble light than when he feigned madness to avert the dangers which he might well dread there. How unlike the terror and self-degradation of the man who "scrabbled on the doors," and let "the spittle run down his beard," is the heroic and saintly constancy of this noble psalm! The "Angel of the Lord" here is to be taken collectively, and the meaning is that "the bright harnessed hosts" of these Divine messengers are, as an army of protectors, around them that fear God. But Scripture speaks also of One, who is in an eminent sense "the Angel of the Lord," in whom, as in none other, God sets His "Name." He is the leader of the heavenly hosts. He appeared when Abraham "took the knife to slay his son," and restrained him. He speaks to Jacob at Bethel, and says, "I am the God of Bethel"; and many other instances there are. It is this lofty and mysterious messenger that David sees standing ready to help, as He once stood, sword-bearing by the side of Joshua. To the warrior leader, to the warrior psalmist, He appears, as their needs required, armoured and militant. The vision of the Divine presence ever takes the form which our circumstances most require. David's then need was safety and protection. Therefore he saw the Encamping Angel; even as to Joshua the leader He appeared as the Captain of the Lord's host; and as to Isaiah, in the year that the throne of Judah was emptied by the death of the earthly king, was given the vision of the Lord sitting on a throne, the King Eternal and Immortal. So to us all His grace shapes its expression according to our wants, and the same gift is Protean in its power of transformation; being to one man wisdom, to another strength, to the solitary companionship, to the sorrowful consolation, to the glad sobering, to the thinker truth, to the worker practical force,—to each his heart's desire. Learn, too, from

this image, in which the psalmist appropriates to himself the experience of a past generation, how we ought to feed our confidence and enlarge our hopes by all God's past dealings with men. David looks back to Jacob, and believes that the old fact is repeated in his own day. So every old story is true for us; though outward form may alter, inward substance remains the same. Mahanaim is still the name of every place where a man who loves God pitches his tent. Our feeble encampment may lie open to assault, and we be all unfit to guard it, but the other camp is there too, and our enemies must force their way through it before they get at us. "The Lord of Hosts is with us." Only, remember, that the eye of faith alone can see that guard, and that therefore we must labour to keep our consciousness of its reality fresh and vivid. Notice, too, that final word of deliverance. This psalm is continually recurring to that idea. The word occurs four times in it, and the thought still oftener. He is quite sure that such deliverance must follow if the Angel presence be there. But he knows, too, that the encampment of the Angel of the Lord will not keep away sorrows, and trial, and sharp need. So his highest hope is not of immunity from these, but of rescue out of them. And his ground of hope is that his heavenly ally cannot let him be overcome. That He will not let him be troubled and put in peril he has found; that He will not let him be crushed he believes. Shaded and modest hopes are the brightest we can venture to cherish. But it is the least we are entitled to expect. And so the apostle, when within sight of the headsman's axe, broke into the rapture of his last words, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to His everlasting kingdom." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The ministry of angels*.—Such ministry taught throughout the Bible. We know not the nature and constitution of worlds and beings unseen. We are taught (*Dan. xii. 1*) that there are guardian angels, and that there are evil angels (*Ephes. xi. 2*). Their name derived from the circumstance of their being sent on various errands. The Lord frequently appeared in the form of an angel. To-day the angels take deep interest in the welfare of God's people. Their form of ministry is changed, but not its reality (*Luke xv.; Matt. xviii. 10; Heb. i. 14*). And why should we not believe that God aids and defends us by means of angels, as our text declares? But it is only they who fear the Lord that enjoy this guardianship. The holy angels can have no fellowship with unholy minds. Let us not question the truth of this ministry, but gratefully accept it. (*J. Slade, M.A.*)

**Vers. 8-14. O taste and see that the Lord is good.**—*Important exhortation*.—**I. A CALL TO THE ENJOYMENT OF DIVINE GOODNESS** (ver. 8). Two things are necessary to the enjoyment of this goodness: 1. Freedom from a sense of guilt. 2. A sense of true gratitude. (1) Enjoying God's goodness involves trust in Him. (2) Trust in Him ensures true blessedness. **II. A CALL TO A HIGHER RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE** (vers. 9, 10). We are to follow on to know the Lord, to forget "the things that are behind, and press on to the things that are before." "There is no want to them that fear Him." 1. Want is a calamity. 2. The higher the religious experience the less liability to want. **III. A CALL TO THE INSTRUCTIONS OF EXPERIENCE** (ver. 11). 1. The highest teaching is the teaching of the Lord. 2. Youth is the best season for this teaching. 3. Teaching children religion is worthy the dignity of the greatest men. **IV. A CALL TO OBEY THE CONDITIONS OF LONGEVITY** (vers. 12-14). 1. Men desire long life. 2. Moral excellence is conducive to long life. (*Homilist*). *Taste and see*.—This is the language of experience, and that of no common character. The psalmist desires that all who might be partakers of his trial might be sharers in his deliverance. He tells us—**I. OF HIS EXPERIENCE**. Paul, as David, speaks of having "tasted of the heavenly gift." The word is most emphatic, for the sense of taste includes most of the others—sight and smell and touch. And certainly it is so in spiritual things. There are among those who are called Christians three distinct classes. There are, first, those who hear without seeing; there are those who both hear and see, without tasting; and there are those in whom all three combine—to whom "faith cometh by hearing," in whom faith groweth by seeing, in whom faith is perfected and consummated by tasting. **II. THE INVITATION**. Those who have had the experience of the psalmist cannot but desire it for others. **III. THE BLESSING**. Such a man is blessed, even in the trust itself; and the blessing is one which not even the errors of his own weak judgment shall destroy, which not even the infirmity of his own frail purpose shall impair. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*) *The invitation of the psalmist*.—The psalms are placed in the centre of the Bible, like the

heart in the centre of the body. The heart is the seat of life. The psalms are the life of religion. Other parts of the Bible describe religion, but the psalms are religion itself. He who reads them sincerely cannot but be religious; and he who appropriates them to himself will find life, health and energy imparted to his whole spiritual being. I. AN INVITATION. "O taste and see," etc. It is not see and taste. Before we taste a substance we generally look at it. But here, we must taste before we can see. There must be a relish for Divine things before we can see and enjoy God. That which we are to see is—"that the Lord is good." The Christian knows and feels this. He sees it in Nature, in his own frame, the structure of the body, its union with the soul. And in that soul itself, and, especially, its redemption by Christ. II. THE CHARACTER REFERRED TO—the man that "trusteth" in God. It is not knowledge, intellect, eloquence, believing, or even power to work miracles, or to show a martyr's zeal, but trust is that which is here spoken of. Confidence in God is meant. Even amongst men this has great power. What will even man do for another in whom he trusts? What will not that woman do for the man in whom she confides? III. THE BLESSING PROMISED. It is more the statement of a fact than a promise, for the man is blessed who trusts in God. By the very action upon his own mind and heart of the trust he places in God. It gives the soul a holy boldness, a sure peace. And not only is he blessed in himself, but he becomes a blessing to others. His light shines before men so that they, too, glorify God. (*W. Blood, M.A.*) *Recreating the palate*.—This confident and jubilant appeal comes at the end of a series of splendid testimonies such as might be heard at many a fervent experience meeting. One man confesses that he had once been enmeshed in multitudinous fears which had crippled his walk towards Zion: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears!" A group of cheery witnesses testified that in past days their faces had been clouded with sorrow, because the sunshine had gone out of their souls: "They looked unto Him, and were lightened!" One man confessed that he had been in many a tight place, closely beset by powerful temptations: "And this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." And then it seems as though the individual testimonies merge into one strain of triumphant assurance—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." Now, out of these testimonies, and as their consequence, there issues a mighty appeal, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Do not trust to hearsay! Do not be contented with the testimonies of others, with merely theoretical knowledge! Become experimental, and judge for yourselves! "Taste and see!" But can everybody's palate be trusted to give an accurate judgment? We know that there are serious differences in the powers of discernment in the material palates of men. One man appreciates a flavour which to another is repugnant. One palate can discern an exquisite flavour where another discovers nothing but insipidity. And may the differences not be equally manifest in moral and spiritual spheres? Jonathan Edwards described the moral sense by the figure of a palate, and he regarded it as a faculty by which we are to appreciate the differences between the evil and the good. But can a palate always be trusted? Let us lay down one or two principles which are operative in other realms than the conscience. It is perfectly true that a neglected power becomes atrophied. In art we can impair the artistic palate by communion with bad work. Ruskin is for ever emphasizing the peril of holding communion with bad artistic work. Such communion vitiates the æsthetic conceptions, and their power of fine discernment is impaired. The principle holds true of literature. If we want to keep a delicate literary palate we must maintain our fellowship with the rarest literary products. If, however, we leave the masterpieces, and take up our abode with the unrefined and commonplace, our very power will lose something of its fine perception, and may eventually cease to register any dependable judgment. Is it otherwise with the religious palate? Take what we call the moral sense. Surely our experience justifies the assertion that this particular power can be so neglected and abused by evil communion that its judgments are rendered perfectly untrue. The Bible declares that some men's moral perceptions are so perverted that they call good evil, and evil good. Sweet they call bitter, and bitter they call sweet. They declare that "revenge is sweet," and the mood of forgiveness is stale and flavourless. And surely we may say that even in higher regions still, in the distinctively spiritual, our powers can be so used that we cease to readily apprehend and appreciate God. It is possible for men to "refuse to have God in their thought,"

and the consequence is that by their own refusal they are "given up" to "a roprobate mind," which may at length leave them in an insensible mood which can only be described as "past feeling." How, then, can we say to these people, "Taste, see that the Lord is good"? What would be the value of their judgment? Can their palate be depended upon? They may taste, and then turn away in sheer indifference. Now a man perfectly well knows when he is destitute of taste for these things. But has he any desire to be different? The appeal of my text is to men and women who have no taste for the highest, but who desire to acquire it. Bring thy neglected or perverted palate, and see what can be done with it! Let me reverse the order of the text, for the key of our difficulty is to be found in the second clause, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in Him." Now, a man can begin with trust in God who has yet no taste for the things of God. Now the text affirms that the assured result of such trust is a condition of blessedness, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in Him." In what does this blessedness consist? Let us redeem it for a moment from all suggestions of futurity, and the maturing of desire in some transfigured and glorified life. The future has vast treasures hid in its secret chambers, and he who trusts in the Lord is heir to them all! "I will restore health unto thee." When we surrender the life to God, the wondrous energies of the Spirit commence the blessed ministry of re-creation, the renewal of tone, and faculty, and function. And in this restoration there is involved the cleansing and refinement of the palate. When we are sickly and diseased we have a distaste for the good, but when the sickness begins to pass the natural appetite is restored and good food becomes toothsome. Now this is what the Lord accomplishes for those who put their trust in Him. He makes new men of them! We become new men and new women in Christ Jesus, and in that transfigured spiritual life is to be found our eternal blessedness. And so this is my plea to you. At present your higher taste may be a positive distaste; your palate may be perverted and untrue. When you pray you have no delight in the communion. When you sing it provides you no joy. Well now, commit yourself unto the Lord, even though in the committal there be no present delight. Offer Him all the powers of your personality, all the activities in your life, and let them be impressed and governed by His all-controlling will. Trust in Him, and the sickness shall be driven out of your soul, and your restored powers shall begin to be exercised in fine and discerning freedom. And in the general restoration your palate shall share, and you shall acquire a relish for the things that are excellent! You shall have joy in His communion. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The invitation to enjoy the goodness of God:—I. WE ARE REMINDED THAT THE LORD IS GOOD.* He is originally, essentially, unchangeably, supremely good. I feel at a loss to express how good He is. What immense families does God continually provide for in air and earth and sea! And chiefly is His goodness seen in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him let all the contrite, the troubled, the tempted come and find help. And all this for sinners. II. *THE BEST WAY OF KNOWING THIS GOODNESS IS BY TASTING IT.* That is—apply it, make trial of it and prove it for yourselves. There is such a thing as experimental religion. Many have full knowledge of the theory of religion, but no experience of it. They have long known its truths, but never felt their power. Oh, the miseries of preaching to such persons, who need no information—these, who feel no emotion. Oh, what a perpetual contradiction is there between your creed and your conduct! You are not happy; and yet, somehow or other, you contrive not to be miserable! But this is not the case with all: there are some who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." You know that the Lord is good by your own experience. Now, you will observe, that we, at first, seek for the blessings of salvation, only from a sense of our sin and guilt; for we have not enjoyed them before. But after we have possessed, then we desire them, not only from a sense of want, but also from a sense of relish and remembrance. Yes; then we call to mind what we have been favoured with, and long for more. Then, secondly, it produces a fuller conviction of the truth of these things. Now, I think, I can trust any poor unlettered man in the presence of the most subtle philosopher, who would endeavour to persuade him that honey was sour, and that gall was sweet. Why, he would say to the tempter,—"would you argue me out of my very senses? You may reason—you may ridicule; but you can never convince me." III. *THE INVITATION TO INDUCE OTHERS TO ACQUIRE THIS KNOWLEDGE FOR THEMSELVES.* "O taste and see that the Lord is good;" "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Now, this "tasting" has several things connected



with it. 1. This is very distinguishable from party zeal. There are some individuals who are never satisfied without bringing others over to their own peculiar views and feelings. It is not enough for them that persons should follow Christ, they must walk with them. 2. This invitation is distinguishable from mere relative affection, for it must reach others; it must extend to strangers. To care for our own is most praiseworthy, but our care must not stop there. 3. We must expect reproach in giving this invitation. There is something very singular in this. Who are censured for their attempts to relieve others by charity? They are not considered as interferers, if they venture to heal the sick, or feed the hungry. If persons do not approve of the manner, they give them credit for the deed. And yet when you endeavour to save others you are considered as busy-bodies. Oh, they will say, "You go to heaven your own way, let us go our way. We do not interfere with you: be as religious as you please, but keep your religion to yourselves." A man cannot keep his religion to himself. If he has any, it will manifest itself. "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." (W. Jay.) *The goodness of God*.—1. Consideration of this subject has a tendency to fix our minds in a state of tranquillity and satisfaction. Perfect goodness is at the head of the world; and, therefore, all may be expected to take place in it that the most benevolent mind can desire. 2. The goodness of God is the proper object of our warmest praises. We must be lost in insensibility if we can contemplate it without feeling ourselves prompted to adoration and thanksgiving. 3. The goodness of God shows us the folly and baseness of sin. All moral evil is an abuse of the love, and disobedience to the authority, of that Being who is always doing us good, and whose character comprehends in it every excellence which can be a reason for affection and veneration. 4. The goodness of God ought to be imitated by us. No being can have a higher or nobler ambition. Thus shall we be His genuine offspring, and secure His particular favour and protection. 5. The goodness of God should engage us to put our trust in Him. How should the reflection that He reigns revive our hearts, and dissipate our anxieties! What may we not hope for from His boundless goodness! How safe are all our interests under His management! (R. Price, D.D.) *The saint's experience of the Divine goodness*.—Though God be infinitely good in Himself, and in the dispensation of the fruits of His goodness unto all His creatures; yet His distinguishing goodness and blessings are extended only to whom He manifests Himself in another way than He doth unto the world, and who believe on His Son according to the Gospel. I. THESE BEHOLD AND EXPERIENCE THE GOODNESS OF HIS NATURE. "God is love. In this was manifested," etc. Would you have just views of it, endeavour to share in its blessed effects. We may say of God's goodness, what Christ said to the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God," etc. How refreshing and satisfying must be the experience of the Divine goodness and love; concerning which the prophet Jeremiah foretells, "they shall come and flow together" (Jer. xxxi. 12–14). II. TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN HIS ATTRIBUTES. His condescending grace was manifested toward you, when you were altogether unworthy of His favour. His clemency appears in the moderating the necessary chastisements which He sees needful to inflict. III. TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD IN HIS DISPENSATIONS, BOTH OF PROVIDENCE AND GRACE. "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." 1. Every blessing, every change, every bereavement shall be sanctified to you, and work together for your good. 2. You may also behold and experience that the Lord is good in the dispensations of His grace. IV. TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD IN HIS ORDINANCES. Every Divine institution is a conduit through which He conveys His best blessings; a market place wherein they get spiritual provisions; a sanctuary where they behold His power and glory. V. TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD IN HIS COVENANT. What admirable goodness hath God displayed in entering anew into covenant with us, after we had broken the first covenant. It is the covenant of peace, of love and of life; the covenant of hope, and of the promises confirmed by the death of Christ and sealed with His blood. All good and nothing but good, grace and glory, with every good is to be found here. (W. McCulloch.) *An invitation to participate in the goodness of the Lord*.—I. SOMETHING ASSUMED. That "the Lord is good." 1. God is infinitely good. 2. Independently good. 3. Absolutely good. 4. Unchangeably good. 5. Universally good. 6. Eternally good. II. SOMETHING IMPLIED. That the goodness of the Lord may be seen and tasted. 1. In the creation. 2. In the provision made for all creatures. 3. In the redemption of

the world by JESUS CHRIST. 4. In the means of grace. 5. In the rewards of heaven. III. SOMETHING ENJOINED. "O taste and see," etc. This invitation, request, or admonition is—1. Divine in its origin. 2. Reasonable in its nature. 3. Pleasurable in its exercise. 4. Profitable in its result. Inferences:—1. There is something more in religion than the mere profession, or outward form; there is the exercise of mental powers; a tasting and seeing the Lord is good. This is personal, and known only to ourselves. 2. How wretched those are who forego these pleasures—who know nothing but animal gratification and sensual pleasure. 3. Those who enjoy personal piety are anxious for others to realize the same enjoyment. 4. If the Lord is good, let us learn the design of that goodness (Rom. ii. 4). (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Experimental evidence of God's goodness*:—I. THE FACT ALLUDED TO IN THE TEXT. We minify the atonement when we consider it merely as one, perhaps the best, of several possible plans of salvation. There is no other way, no other name by which God can save, even if the nature and character of the sinner admitted of others. This plan and this name are rooted and grounded in the nature of God. "Mercy and Truth," or Justice, "have met together"; "Righteousness," or Justice, and "Peace," or Pardon, "have kissed each other." II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. "Taste and see." Religion is a blessed, blissful, glorious experience. It casts out fear, drives away doubt, and sweetens the whole of human life. Religion is love, and love is an experience of the mind, heart, and soul. We love a father, husband, wife, parent, and a child, and we know it. We know it by experience—by the witness of the human spirit. Love to God is lodged in human experience, in human consciousness, just where all other loves are lodged, and we may know that we love God just as readily as we know that we love our parents. We have but one witness to the fact of all human loves; but to the fact of Divine love we have two witnesses—our own spirit and the Spirit of God. This makes assurance doubly sure. Our spirit says we love God, and God's Spirit in ours says we love Him. III. THE EXHORTATION which is implied in the interjection "O!" Ye hungry, poor, here is bounty and richness, without money and without price. Here is a sight that is satisfying, and a taste that fills the soul with infinite fulness. It is the only goodness worthy of the name; the perfection of goodness. Ye who are trying to find God in Nature, O come here, and learn Him as He is seen in grace, and then Nature will not be so intricate as it now seems to be. O, ye doubting Christianity, whose lives are full of sorrow and darkness, come out into the light and enjoy the fulness of blessing; even the direct witness of the Holy Ghost. (*R. G. Porter.*) *Value of experience*:—The appeal to experiment is—1. Very simple. Simple in the two senses: as opposed to what is complex, or complicated and requires an acute and trained mind. The glory of the Gospel is that it is for the common mind, the average man. He who knows enough to commit sin knows enough to be saved. (1) It is simple as opposed to what is subtle. The snare of argument is sophistry, which can array argument so as to appear to prove what is not true. Macaulay can so write even history as to sway the reader to either side of a controversy. (2) Very certain. Experiment may be trusted where argument is unreliable and misleading. It is safe to distrust any reasoning that contradicts known experience. Froude says prussic acid and gum arabic are essentially, elementally, the same. It is not so; but, if they are, one kills, the other is harmless. Many a logician distrusts the very argument he uses to convince others. But no sane man ever disputed the testimony of his senses. 2. In matters of religion we may not experiment by our senses, but may by our reason and conscience, which are the senses of the soul. Communion with God is the most convincing of all arguments for the Being of God, and the practical demonstration of the efficacy of prayer. No experiment is more simple in nature, more certain in results, more sublime in conclusiveness. The oratory is also the observatory whence we get the clearest views of God and celestial things. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Religion pleasant to the religious*:—This excellence and desirableness of God's gifts is a subject again and again set before us in Scripture (Isa. xxv. 6; lxi. 1-8; Hosea, xiv. 5-7; Ps. lxxxii. 13-16). Other passages in the Psalms speak of this blessedness, besides the text (Ps. iv. 7; xvi. 6; xix. 10; xxviii. 7; lxxv. 4). The pleasures of sin are not to be compared in fulness and intensity to the pleasures of holy living. The pleasures of holiness are far more pleasant to the holy than the pleasures of sin to the sinner. None can know, however, the joys of being holy and pure but the holy. Let no persons, then, be surprised that religious obedience should really be so pleasant in itself, when it

seems to them so distasteful. Let them not be surprised that what the pleasure is cannot be explained to them. It is a secret till they try to be religious. None other than God the Holy Spirit can help us in this matter, by enlightening and changing our hearts. So it is; and yet I will say one thing, by way of suggesting to you how great the joys of religion are. Is there any one who does not know how very painful the feeling of a bad conscience is? Persons accustom themselves and lose this feeling; but, till we blunt our conscience, it is very painful. And why? It is the feeling of God's displeasure, and therefore it is so painful. Consider then: if God's displeasure is so distressing to us, must not God's favour be just the reverse? And this is what it is to be holy and religious. It is to have God's favour. I hope there are some of you who take a pleasure in thinking of God, in blessing Him for the mercies of the Gospel, and in celebrating Christ's death and resurrection. These persons have "tasted" and tried. I trust they find the taste so heavenly, that they will not need any proof that religion is a pleasant thing. Let such persons, then, think of this, that if a religious life is pleasant here, in spite of the old Adam interrupting the pleasure and defiling them, what a glorious day it will be if we are blessed hereafter with an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven! (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *The appeal to experiment*:—Knowledge comes to us in three main channels: first, argument addressed to the reason; second, testimony addressed to faith; and third, experiment, which appeals to consciousness. Here the appeal is to experiment. The language is drawn from the sphere of the senses. We are told to taste and see, as though each sense were an eye, and the result was vision. There are five senses, and taste is perhaps the simplest, earliest exercised, and most satisfactory of them all. Our eyes and ears may deceive us, but seldom our taste. Experiment is here set before us as something open to all, a short, simple, safe way of testing the reality of God and His goodness. Argument is not simple nor certain, but often very subtle and unsafe. Testimony is generally safe, but may be mistaken. But experiment impresses us all as to be depended on. We none of us distrust the evidence of our own senses. The text affirms the possibility of making an experiment upon God which shall be conclusive. The agnostic says that God cannot be known, because He is outside of the sphere of sense. We answer, Of course He cannot be known by sense, but must be tested by faculties intended for such experiments, namely, our reason, conscience, love, sensibilities, and faith. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

**Ver. 9. O fear the Lord, ye His saints.**—*A noble cowardice*:—This means that the fear of God does not indicate a defect of the nature. Blindness is a defect; deafness, lameness—these involve privation. But the fear of God does not involve privation; it implies possession. When I go into a picture gallery, and gaze on a work of some master, and say, "I fear I shall never come up to that," does that indicate want on my part? Nay, it is participation. It is the testimony that I am already an artist. My fear is the shadow of my love; the cloud into which I enter is born of my transfigured glory. I would not part with my cloud—not for sunbeams, not for worlds. It tells me that I have seen regions beyond. It is by the artist's soul that I know my own inartisticalness. My night has come from day; it is not want that makes me fear. Oh, Thou Divinely Beautiful, create within me the artist's fear. Give me the sense that I cannot come near Thee, that I am following afar off. Let me feel that Thou art in heaven and I on the earth. Let me tremble before Thy beauty—tremble with the impossibility of ever being worthy of Thee. My trembling is my triumph; my crouching is my crown; my day of judgment is my year of jubilee, for my cry has come from the taste of Thy glory, there is no want in them that fear Thee. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

**Ver. 10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.**—*Lions lacking, but the children satisfied*:—I. A SHORT BUT BEAUTIFUL DESCRIPTION OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN. He is one that seeks the Lord. This description of a Christian is invariably correct. II. THE PROMISE SET FORTH BY WAY OF CONTRAST. "They shall not want any good thing." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;" that is the foil to set off the jewel and make it shine more brightly. "They shall not want any good thing." We have heard of the celebrated cheque for a million pounds which has been preserved; here is one for millions of millions. Here is a promise wide as our wants, large as our necessities, deep as our distresses. But here is a contrast. "The

young lions do lack," etc. There are certain men in the world who, like the lions, are kings over others. They are great and mighty men; they have no need of a Saviour, or of the Holy Spirit! You may think, perhaps, like David, that "they are not plagued like other men." But you don't know that. They are very often plagued when they do not tell you. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Poor and helpless though they are, having no works of righteousness of their own, confessing their sin and depravity, they shall want no good thing. Is it not amazing? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The advantage of seeking the Lord*.—I. THE CHARACTER HERE SPECIFIED. 1. They have been given to see and feel the necessity of seeking the Lord. 2. They have sought the Lord in the appointed way. 3. Seeking the Lord is a constant duty. 4. They seek Him with earnestness and diligence. II. THE ADVANTAGE OF SEEKING THE LORD. They shall not want any good thing—1. Connected with their salvation or acceptance with God. 2. Connected with Divine providence. 3. Necessary for their protection and guidance through the wilderness of this world. 4. To comfort them in darkness and trouble. 5. In reference to communion with God. 6. As respects support in death. 7. To secure their safe arrival in heaven. III. APPLICATION. 1. Learn to trace all this goodness to its proper source. God has given you His choicest gift, even Christ, therefore the inferior ones will not be withheld (Rom. viii. 32). 2. As nothing human can ever become a substitute for the Divine care, constantly live in its enjoyment. 3. How great must be the poverty and wretchedness of the sinner. He is destitute of all these good things. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) *Struggling and seeking*.—I. THE STRUGGLE THAT ALWAYS FAILS. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger." The suggestion is, that the men whose lives are one long fight to appropriate to themselves more and more of outward good, are living a kind of life that is fitter for beasts than for men. What is the true character of the lives of the majority of people but a fight, a desire to have, and a failure to obtain? Beasts of prey, naturalists tell us, are always lean. It is the graminivorous order that meekly and peacefully crop the pastures that are well fed and in good condition—"which things are an allegory." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger." There is no satisfaction or success ever to be won by this way of fighting and scheming and springing at the prey. For if we do not utterly fail, which is the lot of so many of us, still partial success has little power of bringing perfect satisfaction to a human spirit. You remember the old story of the Arabian Nights, about the wonderful palace that was built by magic, and all whose windows were set in precious stones, but there was one window that remained unadorned, and that spoiled all for the owner. His palace was full of treasures, but an enemy looked on all the wealth and suggested a previously unnoticed defect by saying, "You have not a roc's egg." He had never thought about getting a roc's egg, and did not know what it was. But the consciousness of something lacking had been roused, and it marred his enjoyment of what he had and drove him to set out on his travels to secure the missing thing. There is always something lacking, for our desires grow far faster than their satisfactions, and the more we have the wider our longing reaches out, so that as the wise old Book has it, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." You cannot fill a soul with the whole universe, if you do not put God in it. II. THE SEEKING WHICH ALWAYS FINDS. Now, how do we "seek the Lord"? We do not seek Him as if He had not sought us, or was hiding from us. But our search of Him is search after one who is near every one of us, and who delights in nothing so much as in pouring Himself into every heart. It is a short search that the child by her mother's skirts, or her father's side, has to make for mother or father. It is a shorter search that we have to make for God. We seek Him by desire, by communion, by obedience. And they who thus seek Him find Him in the act of seeking Him, just as certainly as if I open my eye I see the sun, as if I dilate my lungs the atmosphere rushes into them. For He is always seeking us. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." So that if we do seek Him, we shall surely find. We each of us have, accurately and precisely, as much of God as we desire to have. If there is only a very little of the Water of Life in our vessels, it is because we do not care to possess any more. "Seek, and ye shall find." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 11-14. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the

**fear of the Lord.**—*The roots of the blessed life:*—What man is he that desireth a life that will extract the real "good" out of things, that will gather the honey in the hidden places, that will discover the essences in experiences, and get the marrow out of trifling and apparently inconsiderable events? That is the modern statement of the problem. In what can we find the life of blessedness, full, spacious and refined? I. **THE FEAR OF THE LORD.** We must put aside all ideas of terror, of trembling servitude, of cringing servility. If the content included any element of terror, the spiritual life would be a doleful bondage; but there are strange conjunctions in the Word of God which make this interpretation impossible. What an amazing companionship is to be found in these words:—"Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice!" "The fear of the Lord" is sensitiveness towards the Lord. It is the opposite of hardness, unfeelingness, benumbment. The soul that fears God is like a sensitive plate exposed to the light, and it records the faintest ray. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Sensitiveness towards God is the beginning of wisdom. Sensitiveness in music is the beginning of musical ability; sensitiveness in art is the beginning of artistic competence. Sensitiveness towards God is the beginning of expertness in the knowledge and doings of God. This sensitiveness towards God is one of the roots of the blessed life. To thrill to His faintest breathings, to hear the still small voice, to catch the first dim light of new revelations, to be exquisitely responsive to the movements of the Father, this is the great primary rootage of a full and blessed life. This sensitiveness towards God is a gift of God. "I will put My fear in their hearts." By waiting upon the Lord, His refining ministry begins to restore the hardened surfaces of our life, and fills us again with a spirit of rare and exquisite discernment. II. **KEEP THY TONGUE FROM EVIL AND THY LIPS FROM SPEAKING GUILE.** It is stupendously significant that in disclosing the secrets of the blessed life, the psalmist should immediately turn to the government of the tongue. Every word we speak recoils upon the speaker's heart, and leaves its influence, either in grace or disfigurement. Therefore "keep thy tongue from evil." Hold it in severe restriction. Venom, that passes out, also steeps in. "And thy lips from speaking guile." Where the lips are treacherous, the heart is ill at ease. Where the lips are untrue, the heart abounds in suspicion. Where the lips have spoken the lie, the heart is afraid of exposure. How, then, can there be blessedness where there is dread? How can there be a quiet and fruitful happiness where poison is impairing the higher powers? III. **DEPART FROM EVIL.** Turn from it. Don't play with uncleanness. Don't touch it with thy finger. Don't hold conversation concerning it, for there are some things of which it is a "shame even to speak." "Depart from evil and do good." The best way to effect a permanent divorce from evil is to exercise oneself in active good. Where there is no positive ministry in goodness, we soon relapse into sin. A positive goodness will make the life invincible. IV. **SEEK PEACE, AND PURSUE IT.** Not the peace of quietness, not, at any rate, the quietness of still machinery, but perhaps the smoothness of machinery at work. We have to live together in families, in societies, in nations, as a race. To seek peace is to seek the smooth workings of this complicated fellowship. We are to labour for right adjustments, equitable fellowships. We are to labour that the companionships of God's children may run smoothly without a wasting and painful friction. "Seek peace, and pursue it." We are not to give up the search because we are not immediately successful. We are not to say that society is hopeless because we make such little headway in the work of readjustment. We are to "pursue" the great aim, to chase it with all the eagerness of a keen hunter, determined not to relax the search until the mighty end is gained. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The duty of teaching children the fear of the Lord:*—I. **EXPLAIN.** In order to fear the Lord we must have a real sense of His being and presence. But God can only effectually teach this. But, relying on Him, we should early wish to teach our children their dependence upon God, their responsibility to Him, the duty of prayer, the preciousness of the Scriptures, the sanctity of the Lord's Day. II. **REASONS FOR TEACHING THEM.** 1. To educate them without teaching them, this is a most defective education. 2. They are not qualified even for this life if they be not taught "godliness." For it enables them to become happier and better members of society, and to more extensively benefit their fellow-creatures. 3. If the teaching of the fear of the Lord be omitted, there had better be no teaching at all. To improve the intellectual capacities without improving the heart and principles will be doing no kindness to those taught or to society at large. Therefore the

importance of Sunday Schools. (*E. Cooper.*) *Children urged to hearken to instruction and to fear the Lord*.—I. WHY CHILDREN SHOULD PAY GREAT ATTENTION TO SERMONS. 1. Because if you do not, you cannot learn. 2. Because you cannot be made good but by learning. 3. Because ministers love you. 4. Because God Himself speaks. II. WHY WE OUGHT TO FEAR GOD. 1. Because He is so great. 2. Because He is so holy. 3. Because He is able to do what He will with you, both in this life and the next. (*E. N. Kirk, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?**—*The happiness of life*.—Why is it we see man on all sides wearying himself in the effort to obtain this and that? It can only be because they imagine that these things will make them happy. But will they? Not so. Most men are hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, which will hold no water. The sad thing is, that men never seem to realize the accumulated experience of others. How many a man has made a lifelong trouble for himself by taking true for false, and false for true! There are small ambitions, remember, as well as large ones. A clerk or a labourer may be as ambitious, everybody may be as ambitious in his sphere, as a statesman or an author in his. I say nothing of meannesses to which men must often submit if they engage in that struggle; I say nothing of the free conscience sold, of the noble independence sacrificed, of the voice of protest silenced; nothing of the fact that fame, if it be anything like fame, will raise many a pang of envy in the breasts of others; I say nothing of the inevitable disappointment, of the disenchantments of fruition; nothing of the cup of success dashed away by death or by change at the very moment that our lips seem to touch it; the very best, and even the very best circumstances, the end gained, can give no real, no deep, no lasting satisfaction. But perhaps you belong to that much larger number of sensible, practical persons who do not think much of the empty bubbles of rank and fame; they want wealth, and what wealth brings. Now if the love of money were not a disease, if it were not the fruitful mother of vices, if it were not difficult for the rich man to be humble and heavenly, if the desire to gain were not a scourge, would Christ have said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," etc.? There is a tribe of North-American Indians who are said to eat clay: I declare to you they seem to me to do no more for the body than the slaves of wealth in Britain do for the hungry soul. If there is no danger in wealth, or rather in the love of wealth, and the exaltation of wealth, would St. Paul have said, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition"? There is only one kind of wealth which has or can have true happiness. It is a wealth far less plentiful than gold; it is the treasure, not of earth, but laid up in heaven,—the wealth which is spent in works of mercy and forethought, and the wealth which is increased by the limitation of reigning desires. And, lastly, are there none of you, especially among young men and young women, who fancy that happiness is to be found neither in rank, nor in wealth, but in the thing they call pleasure? What voices of the dead shall I invoke to describe the emptiness of selfish desire? Shall it be his, the glass of fashion and the mould of form of the last century, Lord Chesterfield? He says, "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their value; but I by no means desire to repeat that nauseous potion for the sake of a fugitive dream." Or shall it be his, the great lyric poet, Heinrich Heine, who in the last eight years of his lingering life, "I am," he writes, "no longer brave, smiling, cheerful; I am only a poor death-sick and shadowy image of trouble—an unhappy man"? Enough: there is and can be no happiness in these things—ambition, money, unlawful pleasure. They are vanity; not only, alas, a mere *vacuum*, but a *plenum* of misery and wrong; not waterless clouds, but clouds that rain mildew; not empty cisterns, but cisterns full of poison and bitterness. If we want happiness at all, we must seek it everywhere, and everywhere it is of the heart. (*Dean Farrar.*) *Life*.—I. LIFE IS A SERIOUS THING. Many do not take it seriously. Their great object is to get through it pleasurably. They glide along the stream of time into the ocean of eternity without ever having realized that "life is real, life is earnest." It is a serious thing because—1. It is the preparation-time for eternity. The time to seek and find in Christ the salvation of our souls. 2. It is the believer's working-time for God. 3. It is a time of conflict with evil. II. LIFE IS ALSO A SOURCE OF JOY. Seriousness and joy are not incompatible. It is a serious thing to have the charge of a young

life. Is it any the less a source of joy to have that precious charge committed to one? Life is a source of joy because—1. God gives us innumerable blessings. 2. If we live it well it is a time of success. Even in this world God ever rewards His toilers with a sense of His presence and favour, and He often grants them true success. 3. Even here we may be conquerors in the conflict with evil through Him who loved us. (*H. P. Wright, B.A.*) *The way to a happy life:—*

**I. TO BRIDLE THE TONGUE.** Innumerable evils grow from this root of bitterness. 1. Perjury. 2. Slander and calumny; the inventing evil things of men, and falsely imputing them to them; this injurious practice to others is apt to provoke the like usage from them again. **II. TO DEPART FROM EVIL, AND DO GOOD.** 1. The practice of virtue and religion is the natural cause of happiness. What can more highly conduce to the health of a man's body, to the vigour and activity of his mind, to the improving of his estate, to the flourishing of his reputation, to the honour and safeguard of his whole life, than this, his departing from evil and doing good? Virtue seldom fails of its reward in this world. 2. The practice of virtue and religion never fails to obtain the patronage and protection of Divine providence. Righteousness is the image of God; true goodness, wheresoever it is, is a beam derived from that fountain of light, which God cannot choose, if He loves Himself, but cherish and bless with a peculiar favour. **III. TO SEEK PEACE, AND PURSUE IT.** 1. What is to be done by us in order to peace? (1) A quiet and peaceable subjection to that government we live under. (2) That every man keep in that place and station Divine providence hath set him, and not venture to act out of his own sphere. Did every under-mariner in a storm leave the pump and his own particular charge to instruct the pilot, or every common soldier in time of battle quit his post to instruct his captain, what tumults and confusions would this breed! (3) A constant and conscientious adhering to the Church. (4) That laying aside all pride and passion and self-interest, we pursue after truth with purity and simplicity of intention. (5) That we bear with one another's weaknesses and infirmities (Col. iii. 13). Human nature is indispensably subject to blindness, impatience and levity, mightily prone to mistake and misbehaviour; the nature of a man's soul is as far from infallibility as the constitution of his body is from immortality, and we can no more hope in all cases to be free from error and mistake, than we can at all times to be exempted from sickness and death. Now how reasonable is it that they should forgive, who so often themselves stand in need of forgiveness! (6) That we pray for peace. The lusts and passions of men are by the psalmist compared to the raging waves of the sea, and the same almighty Power that sets bounds to the one, must also quiet and restrain the other. 2. How great a blessing peace is, and how highly it tends to make our days many and good. (1) As it whets and excites diligence and industry in men's several callings, by giving them hopes of success in them. (2) As it gives men security in the enjoyment of their estates and possessions; in times of popular tumults the fears of losing what a man has creates him more trouble than the enjoyment gives him content. (3) As it affords the fittest opportunity for the practice of religion and virtue, and so conduces to the happiness of the future state as well as of this. (*S. Freeman, M.A.*) *The elixir of life:—* Rosenmüller, the celebrated sacred critic, quotes the following instructive anecdote from the book of Mussar:—"A certain person, travelling through the city, continually called out, 'Who wants the elixir of life?' The daughter of Rabbi Joda heard him, and told her father, who bade her call the man in. When the man entered, the Rabbi asked, 'What is the elixir of life which thou sellest?' He answered, 'Is it not written, "What man is he that loveth life, and desireth to see good days? let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile." This is the elixir of life, and is found in the mouth of man.' " The hero of this anecdote wisely says, "This is the elixir of life." The government of the tongue—consisting, of course, in a proper regulation of the passions—will do more both to sweeten life and to lengthen it, than all the medicines in the world. "The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; it setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." Most of the wars which desolate the earth, most of the tumults which afflict society, and many of the excitements which produce anxiety, sleeplessness, fever, and multitudinous disease, arise from rash, false, or malicious speaking. None but a Christian has this elixir,—no soul, but such as has been "created anew in Christ Jesus," can enchain the malignant passions, making them captive under a reign of holy love, and pour a balm of honeyed words into the wounds of his own or his neighbour's miseries. "The

tongue can no man tame." God alone can achieve the deed. Whoever would find "the elixir of life," must seek it in that Heavenly Physician's laboratory, who "healeth all our diseases," who "satisfieth our mouth with good things," and who "reneweth our youth like the eagle's." **Keep thy tongue from evil.**—*Keeping the tongue from evil*.—1. There are different ways of sinning with the tongue. Our words may be—(1) Exaggerated. It is easy to make light of the common expressions, "terrible," "awful," and the like; but they are on the road to sin, and betray a tendency to make more of things than they deserve, which is at bottom self-conceit. (2) Insincere. Saying pleasant things without meaning them—the wrong and sinful side of politeness. (3) Malicious. Speaking falsely about a person so as to hurt him. (4) Profane. The use of vulgar and blasphemous words which young people adopt as a sign of manly independence. And that often goes further, and becomes filthy and immoral. 2. The tongue may be kept: (1) By keeping the heart right. (2) By persistent effort to break a bad habit. (3) By the choice of good friends. (4) By prayer. (*G. M. Mackie, M.A.*) *Keeping guard over one's words*.—The Chinese have a proverb we shall do well to remember: "A word rashly spoken cannot be brought back by a chariot and four horses." The Hindoos have a similar one: "Of thy unspoken word thou art master, thy spoken word is master of thee;" and many a heartache is caused in this world of ours by the passionate utterance of the hasty and the unkind word. Let us remember the adage trite and true: "Speech is silver, silence is golden;" and, if we cannot speak gently, let us try not to speak at all. **Seek peace, and pursue it.**—*The pursuit of peace*.—The more a man advances in piety the more his inward tranquillity ought to increase. The day grows calmer as the sun draws near its setting. (*J. W. Alexander.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil.**—*The eye of God*.—We all know well how much and often the Holy Scriptures speak of the blessed God, attributing to Him, under a figure, various human things, such as bodily members and organs, and mental feelings. It is an obvious caution, to warn people against understanding all these expressions literally; but it is a caution, one would think, not very necessary in these days. The opposite one, however, is needed, for in our excessive fears of corporeal conceptions of God, the thought of Him is becoming altogether vague and unreal. Our simplicity is our best wisdom, and we should think of God as He is vividly and simply and, as far as our powers can conceive of Him, truly set forth to us in Holy Scripture. The eye of God is, then, over the righteous to protect and comfort them, and His ear open to their prayers, to hear and answer them; while His countenance, not less all-seeing, is turned in displeasure and wrath upon those who do evil, so as to punish them with destruction. His eye is turned upon the good in love, and upon the bad in anger. Consider, then, ye who know well what it is to feel and love the sight of a parent's eye turned on you in approving affection, how God desires, by speaking so, to be regarded by you as looking upon you. Think how, when you have been trying to please your earthly parents, how, perhaps, when you have been trying to overcome some unkind or unworthy temper, some angry or sullen feeling, you have felt their eye turned upon you in tender and loving approbation, and have been encouraged to conquer the evil spirit who was assailing you. And God thus represents Himself to you, and bids you remember that His eye is over the righteous. But His countenance is against them that do evil. He seeth not less the sinners. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Let none suppose that he shuns, or can shun, the eye of God by disregarding it. It is the folly of the foolish bird which shuts its own eyes, and then thinks itself unseen. I would I might, by God's grace, waken up in the hearts of some of you the thought of the eye of God; the thought of the ever-present, ever-wakeful, heart-searching, tender, paternal eye of God, which is over you His own redeemed children! (*G. Moberly, D.C.L.*) *An encouraging theology*.—I. THAT GOD IS SPECIALLY INTERESTED IN THE EXISTENCE OF MAN ON THIS EARTH (vers. 15, 16). 1. Man is His offspring. 2. Man is His suffering offspring. II. THAT GOD IS MAINLY CONCERNED WITH THE MORAL DISTINCTIONS OF MEN ON THIS EARTH. 1. Two classes of moral character are represented in the verses, and they are spoken of—(1) As "wicked," and "righteous." (2) As those that "trust in Him" and those that "hate the righteous." (3) As those that "do evil," and those that are "His servants." His servants are represented as



broken in heart and contrite in spirit. 2. He sees all the other distinctions amongst men, physical, intellectual, social, political, religious. But these moral distinctions interest Him most, they are more affecting to His heart, more vital to the happiness of His creatures, more fundamental to the weal of His universe.

III. THAT GOD evermore treats men according to THE MORAL CHARACTER WHICH THEY SUSTAIN ON THIS EARTH. 1. Look at His conduct towards the righteous. (1) He superintends them; His "eyes" and His "ears" are towards them. He keeps a vigilant watch over them. (2) He hears them. No mother's ears are half so quick to catch the cries of a suffering child as His ears to catch the cries of His afflicted people. (3) He is nigh them. Not in a mere local or physical sense, but in the sense of tenderest sympathy and regard. (4) He saves them. Deep, tender, and constant is His interest in them. 2. Look at His conduct towards the wicked. (1) He is against them for their ruin (ver. 16). (2) He allows their sin to destroy them (ver. 21). (*Homilist.*) *The face of the Lord*:—Our eye is dimmer than the eye of the men of old time for the vision of the face of God. We have greater thoughts, no doubt, about His name, His nature, His purposes, His methods. But His countenance, flashing with intelligence, clouding with sorrow, beaming with love, as it looks out on us through the Creation, seems to escape us. Nature is very beautiful, very glorious, very terrible: but there is no speculation in the eye wherewith she beholds us. Less cultivated peoples seem to discern a presence, to hear a voice, to feel a touch of some living being in all the play and movement of the Creation. To our wise ones it is but the manifestation of vital force, the constant, pitiless swing of the wheels of a vast vital mechanism. But the face of the Lord, to those whose eye is open to behold it, is not veiled; it looks out on them still through its organs of expression in Nature and in man.

I. THE LOFTY AND PATIENT METHOD OF GOD IN GUIDING AND RULING MANKIND. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil; not the weight of His hand as yet. God gives to man a large liberty to do evil. In truth, we hardly realize how large and high is His method. We constantly expect that His hand of force will close upon us in some self-willed, sinful course which we are bent on pursuing; and if He fails to meet us, if the path seems open, if the sun shines, if the birds sing, and the fruits of pleasure hang pendent from the boughs, we are tempted to instruct our own consciences, and to say, God cannot be so sternly set against our self-willed course after all. It is truly fearful to realize the rude limits of our power to corrupt, to torment, to madden His children; to make the world a place of wailing, and life a bitter protest against the goodness and righteousness of His reign. How much are you adding daily to the pain and sorrow of the Creation? Do you never wonder that the iron band of God's power does not close firmly round you, and make you feel that there are limits beyond which you shall not use your fearful prerogative of freedom—beyond which you shall not fill God's seed-field with the seeds of misery and death? But the hand is still open; still dropping, broadcast, blessings on your life.

II. LET US STUDY THE FORMS IN WHICH THE FACE OF GOD IS AGAINST MAN'S EVIL, AND HOW IT BEARS UPON HIS LIFE. 1. There is the face of God in the daylight of Creation (Gen. iii. 8–13). Shame, fear, and a great rout of base and slavish passions enter with sin, and drive out that child's frank joy and trust with which man was made and meant to look up to God. Nature is, in one sense, impassive. But the evil-doer finds an expression on her countenance, a frown on her brow, which startles and appals him. The flash of the lightning across the murderer's path reveals to him something more than the splendour of electric fire. The splendour departs—a dull, sad shadow settles over the world. The evil-doer loses all sense of a living presence in Nature. Life gets drained of its interest, the world of its beauty, the future of its hope. The face of God ceases to affright. It ceases even to appear behind the veil of the invisible. What does this mean? Is it that all barriers are withdrawn, and that the evil-doer has the universe and eternity before him in which to work out his malignant will? Nay, it means that the sinner has passed out of the light of God's countenance, out of the sphere of his freedom, into the grasp of God's terrible hand. This is what is meant by falling "into the hands of the living God." 2. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, in the moral instincts, the moral judgments, of their fellows, and in the whole order of the human world. A man, let us say, walks about burdened with a great, guilty secret. What is it which makes him feel as if every man whom he meets was acquainted with it, and was trying to shame him? What but the face of God looking out on him through the face of man,

His image? 3. The face of the Lord looks out on men through the various forms of the discipline of life. There is a striking instance of what I mean in 1 Kings xvii. 9-18. Day by day you are brought into contact with a mind and a will outside you, not only by what you see, but also by what you endure. 4. The face of the Lord looks out against them that do evil, through the gathering glooms of death. A man hardened in sin may walk at ease through all the pathways of the world, crying, Where is the Lord? in impious defiance or presumptuous scorn. But to every man in death the face reappears—never to vanish again through eternity. Men who have been recovered from apparent death, and have gone through all the experience of dying, tell strange tales of how in one burning moment the buried past reappears. The whole scroll of life unrolled, clear and orderly, before them; every thought, passion, incident, experience, standing out with startling vividness before the mind's eye, and all in the clear daylight. No mist or confusion upon them; all risen again before the face of God. And that vision is for ever. The "vain show" vanishes; the illusion is for ever ended. (J. B. Brown, B.A.)

Ver. 18. **The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.**—*The broken heart and its Divine Restorer*:—The Lord is nigh. Now to be nigh to one object is to be more or less distant from others. So is it with men, and human language is employed to represent what is here told us of God. He cannot really be far from any heart. But, in a very deep sense, He is nigh the broken heart—to help, to comfort, to save. I. **LOOK AT THE BROKEN HEART AND CONTRITE SPIRIT.** "A broken heart," a "crushed spirit," what is it? The heart before us may be considered to be like a piece of fine mechanism disordered, or some work of art fractured—some work of art made of exquisitely delicate material, and of very fine workmanship; or like flesh when worn and bruised. We selfish men like to look on things that are pleasant, and we frequently turn our faces away from that which is unpleasant. You always find God's face turned towards objects like unto these broken hearts and crushed spirits. II. **NOW TO SUCH A HEART GOD IS NIGH, AND SUCH A SPIRIT GOD SEEKS TO SAVE.** 1. He "is nigh" in knowledge, He knows all its history. 2. In ministration. "He saveth such," etc. When God heals the broken heart, it is none the worse for having been broken. An angel could not do this; God can, and does. III. **LEARN THE LESSONS OF THIS TRUTH.** 1. Do not morbidly crave for creature help and fellowship. You can do without them, for God Himself is nigh. 2. Do not think, feel, or act as if He were far off. He has all along known how you would be placed, and He is nigh. 3. Remember that the resources of God are available in the hour of greatest need. 4. Do not despond or despair. You may be broken in heart, or crushed in spirit, without despondency, or despair, being elements of your sorrow; you may either cherish these feelings or fight against them. Now the feeblest fighting against them is victorious, if this struggle be carried on in the name of the Redeemer of men. If you find yourself sinking into some horrible pit of despondency and despair, it is your most sacred duty to cry importunately unto Him. 5. Look a little further by the light of this text, and observe that a broken heart and a crushed spirit are named not as uncommon things. These are not uncommon things in human life; and you who are accustomed to look beyond surface, and beyond curtains, and draperies, and shams, and masks, know this as well as I. 6. But look once more at the text, and mark, that God being nigh is mentioned as something ordinary. A broken heart is common—God's saving is a common thing. Some of you need this text. You need it as a word of warning. You seem to have set yourselves in a kind of morbid obstinacy to cherish a broken heart and a crushed spirit. You seem to have determined to perpetuate your misery. Now this text tells you where to turn for help. You cannot find it apart from God. No man ever yet healed his own crushed spirit, never will. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Your fellow-Christians, religious books, consolatory hymns—all these are good so long as they lead you to God, but if they come between you and the Great Helper, you are better without them. These books cannot do the work you require to be done for you. (Samuel Martin.) **A broken heart:—I. THIS HEART FEELS THAT IT DESERVES TO BE BROKEN, DEEPLY HUMBLLED, YEA, CRUSHED WITH ANGUISH.** The source of its sorrow is conscious delinquency, undeniable guilt, the abuse of many a mercy, and a heedless indulgence in many an evil passion. The sorrow thus produced is oftentimes unspeakably severe. Poverty

may depress, persecution may harass, disease may prostrate, and bereavement produce painful blanks in the domestic circle; but a sorrow, more intense than is felt in all these has a place in the broken heart. II. A BROKEN HEART IS THANKFUL THAT IT HAS BEEN BROKEN. It feels that a power has been put forth upon it altogether foreign to itself, and apart from any means for this purpose that it could employ; and hence its adoring gratitude for the change effected. III. A BROKEN HEART DESIRES TO BE MORE AND MORE BROKEN. Washington Irving is represented to have said that "sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other wound we seek to heal, every other affliction to forget; but this wound we consider it a duty to keep open; this affliction we cherish, and brood over in solitude." Such language is, no doubt, very beautiful, and touchingly expressed. But how did this amiable student of the common sympathies of humanity forget that broken heart, of deepest interest, which refuses to be divorced from its sorrow on account of sin? IV. A BROKEN HEART SURVEYS WITH AMAZEMENT THE INNUMERABLE MERCIES WITH WHICH IT IS ENCOMPASSED. These mercies are like the stars of heaven for multitude; and there stands in the midst of them the gift of God's Son, like the king of day amid the lesser luminaries of the sky. What a mercy is the Word of God! It testifies of Christ, and brings life and immortality to light. What a mercy is a throne of grace! I have sins, and I can go there for pardon; I have a polluted nature, and can go there for purity; I have enemies, and can go there for help; for weakness I can go there for strength; and for sickness, I can go there for health. V. A BROKEN HEART IS A TENDER HEART—affectionate, forgiving, forbearing. VI. A BROKEN HEART IS AN ACQUIESCING HEART. VII. A BROKEN HEART TRIUMPHS IN THE ASSURANCE THAT ALL ITS SORROWS SHALL ISSUE IN RIVERS OF PLEASURE AND A FULNESS OF JOY. Upon what does this assurance rest? It rests upon the fact of its own existence. Why has God broken this heart? That it may never be healed? No, no. Let us not, then, invest it with gloom, and sullenness, and sorrow. Let us invest it with joy. (*Thomas Adam.*) *A broken heart*:—A gentleman, having broken his watch glass, entered a jeweller's to have a new one fixed. When the watch was returned, he inquired how much they would allow for the broken pieces. On being told that broken things were of no value, he said, "I have a book at home that says something is no good till it is broken." "That must be a strange kind of book," said the jeweller. "Yes," said the other, "'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.'" "I see you are talking religion," was the reply. (*Newton Jones.*) *The obdurate heart softened*:—Go into a cast-iron foundry and witness the extraordinary process by which fire conquers the solid metal, until it consents to be cast or stamped or rolled into the form which the artificer requires. This is a type of God's moral foundry, when an obdurate heart is first so softened as to feel the truth, then to weep over sin, then to be ductile, then so flexible as to be formed into a shape that pleases the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vers. 19, 20. **Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.**—*The trial of the righteous*:—The sum of this verse is as if he should say, Let the righteous look for more troubles than others, and likewise let them hope for greater comforts than others; for when they are well, they shall be eclipsed again, to show that their light was but borrowed; and when they are eclipsed, their light shall return, to show their difference from them whom God hateth, which fall from plague to plague, as they run from sin to sin. I. WHAT MAKES OUR TROUBLES SO HARD TO BEAR IS OUR LACK OF PATIENCE. How great is our need of this grace! "A sound spirit," saith Solomon, "will bear his infirmity, but a wounded spirit what can sustain?" (Prov. xviii. 14). Therefore as the lid is made to open and shut, to save the eye, so patience is set to keep the soul, and save the heart whole, to cheer the body again. Therefore if you mark, when you can go by an offence, and take a little wrong and suffer trouble quietly, you have a kind of peace and joy in your heart, as if you have gotten a victory, and the more your patience is, still the less your pain is. For as a light burden, borne at the arm's end, weigheth heavier by much, than a burden of treble weight, if it be borne upon the shoulders, which are made to bear; so if a man set impatience to bear his cross, which is not fit to bear, it will grumble, and murmur, and let the burden fall upon his head, like a broken staff, which promiseth to help him over the water, and leaveth him in the ditch. But if you put it to patience, and set her to bear it, which is appointed to bear, she is like

the hearty spies that came from Canaan, and said, "It is nothing to overcome them" (Joshua ii.). Among the strange cures of patience, David may report of his experience what this plaster hath done for him; for, being a figure of Christ, he was always hedged about with the Cross, which proved his patience like a touchstone every day. As Christ was condemned of his countrymen, so David was condemned of his brethren (1 Sam. xxvi. 2); as Christ fled to Egypt, so David fled unto Gath; as Christ received food of women, so David received food of Abigail (Luke viii. 2); as Herod persecuted Christ, so Saul persecuted David. Thus, by his own foot, David measured the condition of the righteous, and saith, "Many are the troubles of the righteous"; and then, by his own cure, he sheweth how they should be healed, saying, "The Lord will deliver him out of all." If ye mark, the Spirit hath directed David to those two things which make us take our troubles grievously: one, because we do not look for them before they come. Therefore, as Christ told Peter before he suffered, to strengthen him when he suffered (John xxi. 18); so the Holy Ghost doth run upon the cross to keep us in expectation of troubles, that we might prepare faith, and patience, and constancy for them, as Noah prepared an ark for the flood. II. The second thing which makes us to start so at the cross is, because we are like the prophet's servant, which did see his foes, but not his friends (2 Kings vi.); so WE SEE OUR SORE, BUT NOT OUR SALVE. Comfort seems afar off, like Abraham in the heavens (Luke xvi.), as though it would never come so low. Therefore we go about to deliver ourselves, as it is said, Ps. ii., "Let us break his bands," as though we could deliver ourselves. But "hold your peace," saith Moses, "the Lord shall fight for you" (Exod. xiv. 14). So David comes in like a pacifier, and saith, "Vex not yourselves, for the Lord will deliver you." Bear both these sentences in mind, that you must go through a sea of troubles, and that then you shall come to the haven of rest, and no affliction shall take you before you be armed for it, or you be without your remedy: "Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." Here be the two hands of God, like a wound and a plaster, one casteth down, and the other raiseth up. It is good for a man to know his troubles before they come, because afflictions are lightened in the expectation (Acts ix. 16; Matt. xvi. 24; John ii. 10). This is the manner of God's proceedings to send good after evil, as He made light after darkness (Gen. i. 3). The knife of correction must prune and lop off men's rotten twigs before they can bring forth fruit. III. YET OUR TROUBLES ARE BUT TROUBLES. When God doth visit the wicked, His punishments are called plagues and destructions; the plagues of Egypt, the curse of Cain, the destruction of Sodom. But when He doth visit the righteous, His punishments are called corrections, and chastisements, and rods, which proceed from a Father, not to destroy us, but to try us, and purge us, and instruct us. And as Jacob was blessed and halted both at one time, so a man may be blessed and afflicted both together. Afflictions do not hinder our happiness, but our happiness cometh by affliction, as Jacob's blessing came with halting (Gen. xxxii.), and as peace is procured by war. (*Henry Smith.*) *The good man under afflictions*.—I. AFFLICTIONS OFTEN BEFALL THE BEST OF MEN; some, that are common to them with the rest of mankind, and others, that are peculiar to persons of this character. The righteous man, as well as others, may be deserted by his friend, and abused by his enemies. Death may deprive him of those dear to him, and swell his heart with sorrow. His virtue will not secure him from infamy and contempt, from losses and disappointments in his worldly affairs; from poverty, and the thousand hardships that attend it, from bad health and painful distempers. Then, besides his own private afflictions, the good man, through the tenderness of his heart, feels the calamities of his fellow-creatures, and shares in the manifold evils he sees them suffer. Righteousness or virtue sometimes draws upon itself the hatred of bad men, with all the evils they are able to inflict. Eminent worth, which outshines others, and makes them appear despicable and mean, provokes their envy, the most bitter and deadly of human passions. Besides, integrity may lead a man to oppose the wicked in their unjust and mischievous designs; wherefore these will join themselves to such as envy him, and increase the number of his enemies. II. WHY THE RIGHTEOUS ARE AFFLICTED. If God lays affliction upon the righteous, it is not because He has no distinguishing regard for them; but because their sufferings may answer many valuable purposes both to others and themselves. 1. I say, others may reap various advantages by observing the sufferings of good men. By such events God may intend to admonish us, that

prosperity is not the best of blessings, nor adversity the worst of evils; since He frequently dispenses the one, and denies the other to His own children. The suffering of the righteous may also be of service to the world; as by this means their virtues are more clearly displayed, and recommended with greater force to the imitation of mankind. 2. Their afflictions often produce great advantages to the sufferers themselves. Among these, I am not afraid to mention the glory they derive from hence. Suffering virtue at least may surely be allowed to comfort itself with the foresight of that veneration, which is wrongfully withheld from it when living; but which posterity will pay with interest to its surviving memory. Nor is it a small advantage, that by means of their sufferings the righteous may attain a comfortable assurance of their own constancy. Sometimes also adversity is profitable to good men, as it helps to cure them of their remaining imperfections. III. THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S SUPPORTS UNDER AFFLICTIONS. 1. The native strength of his virtue, which enables him to break their force by opposing to them a firm and constant mind. 2. Religion also lends him a powerful aid. (*John Holland.*)

Ver. 21. **Evil shall slay the wicked.**—*Sin the slayer*:—"Evil shall slay the wicked." When? Now. The judgment is in process of execution to-day. Evil slays men to-day. Righteousness delivers men to-day. I. **EVIL SHALL SLAY THE WICKED.** Have you ever known that to happen? Have you ever known evil to slay a man—I don't mean the man's body, but the man? It is a daily commonplace. When we see a man who is the victim of some sin, we do not speak of him as dying or as being slain. We speak of him as one "taking the bad way," "going down the hill," "going to ruin," as one who is "becoming a wreck." The victims of evil are dying, dying from the effects of evil, and eventually they are slain. Now, there is no form of evil which does not make for destruction, for moral and spiritual death. "The soul that sinneth shall die." The soul begins to die at once. The poison begins to act immediately. My text does not specialize any particular evil—drunkenness, or sensualism, or gambling, or falsehood, or deceit. It speaks of them all as one, generalizes them, heaps them together and says, "Evil shall slay the wicked!" Anything that is destroying a woman's womanhood is slaying the woman. Anything that is destroying a man's manhood is slaying the man. 1. What makes a man? What are the supreme and characteristic glories of a true man? A good conscience, a sound heart, and a vigorous will. A healthy man has a conscience by which he knows the right. He has a heart by which he loves the right. He has a will by which he does the right. Take away any of those three from a man and the man is maimed. You do not use the title "man" of one who has no conscience. You do not use it to describe one who has no heart. You do not use it of manhood which is destitute of will. Instinctively you feel that manhood which lacks these attributes is not worthy of the name. When these three are destroyed, the man is slain. Now, how does evil affect these primary glories of manhood? (1) How does evil affect the will? Will, in the relationship in which I speak of it, is moral muscle. Will-power is resolution of purpose, power of determination, power of aggression or resistance. How, then, does evil affect the will? Poison weakens the body; moral poison weakens the will. Every time we give way to deceit, to temper, to passion, to lust, we make it harder to walk in the path of rectitude and truth. Every time we have dealings with evil we impair and diminish our moral resources. Evil slays the wicked man, and it begins by slaying his will. (2) How does evil affect the heart? Have you marked what often happens when some dark evil has stolen into a Christian man's life? Prayer is forgotten. Work is neglected. The Sanctuary is forsaken. His ardour cools, and he no longer loves the truth. His love has become perverted. How is it? When men love darkness it is because evil has injured their hearts. The heart is given us to love the truth, but evil injures the heart, abuses the heart, destroys its pure affection, and makes it the instrument of darkness. If we take evil into our life we shall lose the power to love the right; we shall be unmanned, evil which slays the wicked will destroy the heart. (3) How does evil affect the conscience? Here is my lamp. My lamp says, "I will give light conditionally. I will give light if you will give oil." My conscience, the lamp of my soul, says, "I will give light conditionally. I will give light if you will give oil." If a man refuses to obey his conscience, he refuses to give it oil, and it will burn dimmer and dimmer until at last it will become a confusion of smoke. It is possible for a conscience to lose its brightness, its clear, decisive indication; nay,

it is not only possible, it is inevitable if we pursue towards it a course of disobedience. 2. Well, now, here is what evil can do. It weakens my power to do the right. It destroys my love of right. It obscures my knowledge of right. It paralyzes my will. It clouds my conscience. It perverts my heart. If evil can do all these things, does it not slay? Does it not destroy the strength and beauty of human life? It takes our manhood and womanhood and by cutting down all their glories reduces them to be a mere collection of attributes of the flesh. II. But there is another side to all this: if evil slays the wicked, **RIGHTEOUSNESS DELIVERS FROM DEATH.** If evil degrades our life by taking away the crown of manhood, and the beauty of womanhood, righteousness enlarges the life by nourishing it from glory to glory. Evil throws about us an atmosphere which induces death. Righteousness throws about it an atmosphere which ministers to life. What is the fruit of righteousness? Not only some heaven that is to be. Not only some great reward awaiting us in remote futurity. The fruit of righteousness is to be "a tree of life." The righteous man, here and now, is to be like a grand, roomy, living tree, full of healthy sap, and exulting in the fullness of its strength. Every part of him is to be alive. That is the tendency of righteousness, of right living, of right doing and being; it makes for life, abundant life. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Ver. 22. **None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.**—*No condemnation*:—The R.V. accurately renders the words: "None of them that trust in Him shall be condemned." When we read in the New Testament that "we are justified by faith," the meaning is precisely the same as that of our text. Thus, however it came about, here is this psalmist, standing away back amidst the shadows and symbols and ritualisms of that Old Covenant, and rising at once, above all the mists, right up into the sunshine, and seeing, as clearly as we see it, that the way to escape condemnation is simple faith. I. **THE PEOPLE THAT ARE SPOKEN OF HERE.** "None of them that trust in Him." The word that is here translated, rightly, "trust," means literally to fly to a refuge, or to betake oneself to some defence in order to get shelter there. There is a trace of both meanings, literal and metaphorical, in another psalm, where we read, amidst the psalmist's rapturous heaping together of great names for God: "My Rock, in whom I will trust." Now keep to the literal meaning there, and you see how it flashes up the whole into beauty: "My Rock, to whom I will flee for refuge," and put my back against it, and stand as impregnable as it; or get myself well into the clefts of it, and then nothing can touch me. Then we find the same words, with the picture of flight and the reality of faith, used with another set of associations in another psalm, which says: "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust." That grates, one gets away from the metaphor too quickly; but if we preserve the literal meaning, and read, "under His wings shalt thou flee for refuge," we have the picture of the chicken flying to the mother-bird when kites are in the sky, and huddling close to the warm breast and the soft, downy feathers, and so with the spread of the great wing being sheltered from all possibility of harm. There is one thing more that I would notice, and that is that this designation of the persons as "them that trust in Him" follows last of all in a somewhat lengthened series of designations for good people. They are these: "the righteous"—"them that are of a broken heart"—"such as be of a contrite spirit"—"His servants," and then, lastly, comes, as basis of all, as, so to speak, the keynote of all, "none of them that trust in Him." That is to say—righteousness, true and blessed consciousness of sin, joyful surrender of self to loving and grateful submission to God's will, are all connected with or flow from that act of trust in Him. And if you are really trusting in Him, your trust will produce all these various fruits of righteousness, and lowliness, and joyful service. II. **THE BLESSING HERE PROMISED.** "None of them that trust in Him shall be condemned." The word includes the following varying shades of meaning, which, although they are various, are all closely connected, as you will see—to incur guilt, to feel guilty, to be condemned, to be punished. All these four are inextricably blended together. And the fact that the one word in the Old Testament covers all that ground suggests some very solemn thoughts. 1. Guilt, or sin, and condemnation and punishment, are, if not absolutely identical, inseparable. To be guilty is to be condemned. 2. This judgment, this condemnation, is not only present, according to our Lord's own great words, which perhaps are an allusion to these: "He that believeth not is

condemned already"; but it also suggests the universality of that condemnation. Our psalmist says that only through trusting Him can a man be taken and lifted away, as it were, from the descent of the thundercloud, and its bolt that lies above his head. "They that trust Him are not condemned," every one else is; not "shall be," but is, to-day, here and now. III. THE SOLE DELIVERANCE from this universal pressure of the condemnatory influence of universal sin lies in that fleeing for refuge to God. And then comes in the Christian addition, "to God, as manifested in Jesus Christ." You and I know more than this singer did, for we can listen to the Master, who says, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned"; and to the servant who echoes, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Gospel before the Gospel*.—I. WHAT TRUST IS. We do not need to bewilder ourselves with metaphysical and theological subtleties. We know what it is to run to a refuge from storm or danger. So, then, "none of them that flee to Him for refuge shall be condemned." II. THE ACCOMPANIMENTS IN THE DEVOUT SOUL OF TRUE TRUST IN GOD. Has it by its side a real penitence? Does there walk behind it a consistent and steadfast righteousness? Are we not only trusting the Lord, but serving Him? If our faith has drawn after it these things, it is true. If it has not, it is no real flight to the one Refuge. Righteousness in heart and in character and in conduct is the child of trust. True contrition accompanies it in its birth, but is nourished and nurtured by it thereafter. III. THE GREAT REWARD AND BLESSING OF QUIET TRUST. "None of them that flee to Him for refuge shall be condemned." The word in its original and literal meaning, signifies "desolate." And I would have you to think of the profound truth that is covered by the fact that such a word should afterwards take on the meaning of "guilt." It teaches that guilt is desolation. Again, note the profound truth that lies in the other fact that the self-same word means "guilty" and "punishment." For that says to us that criminality and retribution always go together, and that the same thing, in one aspect, is our sin, and, in another aspect, is our hell and punishment. Then, further, note that broad, unconditional, blessed assurance, cast into negative form, but involving a great deal more than a negation, "None of them that trust in Him shall be condemned." The reason why they that trust in Him are not condemned is because they that trust in Him, stand in the full sunshine of His love, and are saturated and soaked through and through, if they will, with the warmth and the light and the felicity of its beams. "They shall not be condemned," and "whom He justifies them He also glorifies." (*Ibid.*) *A message to the desolate*.—To be desolate is to be devastated and destroyed. The ruin, whether of temple or of colosseum, is a picture of desolation. It is also loneliness. We have seen the solitary cottage among the Alps. There was no other cottage in sight, only the unbroken mountain range. We have seen the lone cabin on the plains, or the ship on the sea with nothing but the waters beneath and the sky above. These are pictures of desolation and loneliness which, I am inclined to think, find their duplicate in the life of men and women. I. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CAUSES? 1. To be misunderstood. The misunderstandings of life are nails to the hands or flames to the body. They cut one off from fellowship; they hurt and hinder and add to the solitude of life. Our Lord was misunderstood. He was isolated by the very fact that He was not understood. Therefore, upon at least three different occasions the Father encouraged Him. When He was baptized the voice of approval broke through the skies. When He was transfigured God spoke to Him and encouraged Him with the revelation of His presence, and in the Garden of Gethsemane the angel ministered unto Him. The satisfaction of His heart was found in the consciousness that while men did not understand Him God did. That saved Him from utter desolation. That saves us all from despair. To know that God knows us and understands us is to enjoy the highest spiritual companionship. 2. In proportion as we go far below or far above the common experiences of men do we experience isolation. The cathedral spire and the mountain peak are lonely. They are solitary. They enjoy no companionship. They are exceptions. So the shaft sunk deep in the earth is exceptional. A great emotion whether of joy or grief projects the life out of the ordinary; as an inlet of the sea. There is a loneliness and isolation in great thinking. Thomas Carlyle led a comparatively lonely life, a life of intellectual desolation, partly because he threaded his way up the dizzy heights of thought. 3. When you have a great sorrow it must be met and borne alone. Every soul goes through the valley of the shadow of death essentially alone so

far as human help is concerned, which is to say, every heart knows its own sorrow and must bear its own burden. In the greatest griefs there is room only for the soul and God. 4. Sin leads to desolation. There is no real companionship in sin. Sin is destructive of brotherhood and fellowship. It narrows the life. The source of sin is selfishness, and the more selfish a life is the more narrow and lonely and desolate it is. Sin is desolation. It is a desert without a spring. Desolation is hell. We do not know much about the hell of the future, but we do know something of the hell of the present. II. WHAT, THEN, SHALL WE DO TO ESCAPE THE LIFE OF DESOLATION? How shall we people our little world with companions and brighten it with brotherhood and blessings? 1. By a right use of the mind. We do not know precisely what or where the mind is, but we do know that it is the measure of the man. It is the eternal within us. Whatever may happen to the body, if the mind's sky is clear, what matters it? If our minds master us, rules and lead us, we will derive an immense amount of good from life, and each one, like St. Catherine of old, will have a secret oratory within which we may retreat. 2. Trust; trust in God. This is an old and well-worn injunction. For centuries men have been urged to trust in God. Why should they? Does it put bread in the pantry and money in the bank? Does it keep disease from the children or sorrows from the home? Why should we trust in God? We should believe that God is with us always. We do or do not believe this. If we do not we are desolate. If we do we are not desolate. (IV. Rader.)

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### PSALM XXXV.

VER. 3. *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*—*Saved or unsaved.*—I. THE EARNEST ENTREATY OF A TROUBLED SOUL. It was said of the great Sir Isaac Newton that he had a white soul, so pure was it. But this can be said of very few. They do not feel their need of salvation. When you become awakened it is a crisis of your life. You begin to ask concerning things whether they be right or wrong. Your conscience is tender and sensitive. And you must hear for yourself. "Say unto my soul"—so reads the text. But whose soul? Why, the soul of every man who desires salvation. II. THE GOOD DESIRED. It is salvation. Our Lord Jesus is willing to save all men. More willing than the men in the lifeboat to save the people from the wreck. Sometimes the lifeboat dare not venture out to sea; but there is never a time when the Lord Jesus will refuse to save shipwrecked souls. I was much touched to hear a lifeboat man say, that at a certain wreck off the Orme's Head, near Llandudno, when the lifeboat put off to save the passengers and sailors of the vessel in distress, it was impossible to take all of them into the boat, and many were left. The men would have gladly saved all, but their boat was not large enough. Now, our Lord can save all mankind. And He will save us from our faults as well as from our sins. And you need this, for faults will grow up into sins if not rooted out. III. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD DOING THIS. He says "I am thy salvation." What God says, can and will be done. It is not "I may," or "I could" do this; but I am thy salvation." If God can make a world so beautiful as this, can He not purify our souls? If He can tint the flower and make it lovely, cannot He redeem us from all iniquity? IV. THERE IS A PERSONAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Hannah More once said that if we preach about a privilege and do not mention the person who should have the privilege, it is like putting a letter into the post-office without any direction upon it. If you want this salvation, it is ready; but for whom is it intended? For every creature, and it is particularly addressed to you. Jesus did not say, "Go into all the world and save nations," but "Go into all the world and preach the good news to every creature." So, this salvation is meant for you. Then, when you are saved, your example shall bless the world. But until you are saved, your example is worth very little. (W. Birch.) *Full assurance.*—Many enemies were round David, but he feels there is only one thing God needs to do to make him strong. Let but God say unto his



soul, "I am thy salvation," and he will defy them all. I. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF FULL ASSURANCE. 1. Some say it is better a man should stand in jeopardy, better for him to have doubts and fears. 2. Others say full assurance cannot be had. But it is possible, and has been enjoyed by many. If it were impossible, would we, as here, be told to pray for it? Romanists and formalists object; the former because it would do away with Purgatory, and the latter because they want no one to be better than themselves. 3. Others because some have pretended to it who have never been saved. 4. Or because they think the doctrine makes men careless. But confidence of success stimulates exertion, and realizing assurance overcomes all difficulties. 5. Others who trust in their good feelings would have us groan in the Lord always. Of all the Diabolians, Mr. Live-by-feeling was one of the worst. II. THE TEXT ITSELF. It seems to say—1. That David had his doubts, or he would not have thus prayed. 2. But he was not content to remain in doubt. 3. And he knew where to obtain full assurance. Then take each word of the text and note its force. It is by His word, and by His ministers, and by His Holy Spirit, God says this to the soul. III. HEAR THE PREACHER. He would speak to those who neither know nor care to know that they are saved; beware of your condition, for it is full of peril. And what folly on your part, for you have soon to die. And though you may not now feel it, you are most miserable. But do you wish to be saved? Then Christ is for thee. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Heaven made sure, or the certainty of salvation*:—The words contain a petition for a benediction. The supplicant is a king, and his humble suit is to the King of kings: the king of Israel prays to the King of heaven and earth. He doth beg two things:—1. That God would save him. 2. That God would certify him of it. So that the text may be distributed accordingly into salvation, and the assurance of it. The matter is assurance; the manner, how assured: "Say unto my soul." I. FROM THE MATTER, OR ASSURANCE, observe—1. That salvation may be made sure to a man. David would never pray for that which could not be. Nor would St. Peter charge us with a duty which stood not in possibility to be performed (2 Pet. i. 10). "Make your election sure." Paul directly proves it (2 Cor. xiii. 5). "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" We may then know that Christ is in us. 2. That the best saints have desired to make their salvation sure. David that knew it, yet entreats to know it more (Ps. xli. 11). "I know thou favourest me;" yet here still, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." A man can never be too sure of his going to heaven. If we purchase an estate here, we make it as sure, and our tenure as strong, as the brawn of the law or the brains of the lawyer can devise. Now from this desire of David we draw matter—(1) Of consolation. Even he desired better assurance. Sometimes a dear saint may want feeling of the spirit of comfort. But God doth sometimes hide from men this comfort—to extend their desires, to enlarge their joys when they shall again find the consolation they thought lost. To try whether we will serve God gratis, though we get nothing for it (Job i. 9). To make us more careful of this comfort when we have it. (2) Of reprehension to others who are thinking all is well when it is not so. (3) Of instruction, teaching us to keep the even way of comfort; eschewing both the rock of presumption on the right hand, and the gulf of desperation on the left. Let us neither be over-bold nor over-fainting, but endeavour by faith to assure ourselves of Jesus Christ, and by repentance to assure ourselves of faith, and by an amended life to assure ourselves of repentance. For they must here live to God's glory that would hereafter live in God's glory. 3. In the next place, observe the means how we may come by this assurance. This is discovered in the text, "Say unto my soul." 4. Such assurance is the sweetest comfort that can come to a man in this life. There is no potion of misery so embittered with gall but this can sweeten it with a comfortable relish. When enemies assault us, get us under, triumph over us, imagining that salvation itself cannot save us, what is our comfort? "I know whom I have believed;" I am sure the Lord will not forsake me. What state can there be wherein the stay of this heavenly assurance gives us not peace and joy? II. THE MANNER. "Say unto my soul." God hath spoken—1. By His own voice (Gen. iii. 8; Deut. iv. 15; John xii. 28; 2 Pet. i. 17). 2. By His works (Ps. xix. 1). 3. By His Son (Heb. i. 1). 4. By the Scriptures (Ro. xv. 4). Oh that we had hearts to bless God for His mercy, that the Scriptures are among us, and that not sealed up under an unknown tongue! 5. God speaks by His ministers, expounding and opening to us those Scriptures. These are dispensers of

the mysteries of heaven. This voice is continually sounding in our churches, beating upon our ears; I would it could pierce our consciences, and that our lives would echo to it in an answerable obedience. How great should be our thankfulness! Let us not say of this blessing, as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" nor be weary of manna with Israel, lest God's voice grow dumb unto us, and, to our woe, we hear it speak no more. No, rather let our hearts answer with Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 10), "Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear." If we will not hear Him say to our souls, "I am thy salvation," we shall hear Him say, "Depart from Me, I know you not." 6. God speaks by His Spirit: this "Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," etc. Perhaps this is that "voice behind us" (Isa. xxx. 21), as it were, whispering to our thoughts, "This is the way, walk in it." It is the Church's prayer (Cant. i. 2). The Holy Ghost is the kiss of God the Father. Whom God kisseth, He loveth. Now by all these ways doth God speak peace to our consciences, and say to our souls that He is our salvation: "I am thy salvation."—The petition is ended. I will but look into the benediction, wherein I should consider these four circumstances: Who, What, To whom, When. Who?—The Lord. He alone can (Hos. xiii. 9). What?—Salvation. A special good thing: every man's desire, though he be running hellward. Man would be blessed, though he takes the course to be cursed. I will give thee a lordship, saith God to Esau. I will give thee a kingdom, said God to Saul. I will give thee an apostleship, saith God to Judas. But, I will be thy salvation, He says to David, and to none but saints. To Whom?—My soul. Not others' only, but mine. When?—In time present. "I am." To conclude: it is salvation our prophet desires. Not riches. He that prefers riches before his soul doth but sell the horse to buy the saddle, or kill a good horse to catch a hare. He begs not honour: many have leapt from the high throne to the low pit. The greatest commander on earth hath not a foot of ground in heaven, except he can get it by entitling himself to Christ. He desires not pleasures; he knows there are as great miseries beyond prosperity as on this side it. And that all vanity is but the indulgence of the present time; a minute begins, continues, ends it: for it endures but the acting, and leaves no solace in the memory. In the fairest garden of delights there is somewhat that stings in the midst of all vain contents. The Christian seeks "that better part which shall never be taken from him." (T. Adams.) *Soul salvation*.—Our text brings to our view the soul of man, and, whilst preaching therefrom, I also will try to show some of the causes of the apparent failure of Christianity. It is not Christianity which is at fault, but Christians who are not Christlike. I. WHY IS IT THAT MEN DO SO NEGLECT RELIGION? 1. A large portion of the community is deceived by riches. They think all their happiness lies in what riches can give. Hence they toil early and late; they think about nothing else. But when they get rich they are never satisfied. I do not ask for an equal distribution of wealth, but I call upon the rich to be trustees for the world, and to say, "Lord, all that I have is Thine; how shall I use it for Thy glory, and for the good of my fellow-men?" Another cause of the apparent failure of Christianity is—2. The errors of many teachers and ministers. 3. A third cause is the unreasonableness of scepticism. Christianity has blessed the lives of all who believed in it. It has made the drunkard sober, the thief honest, and has delivered men from the power of darkness into God's marvellous light. The path of Christ's truth will carry the world to peace and happiness, if they will but walk therein. 4. The last cause which I shall mention is that people hold false notions about God. Many men think if they pay a large sum to a church, or to some good cause, God will smile upon them. And the unfortunate one who, time after time, relapses into sin believes God cannot forgive one who falls so often. "He may forgive and bless those who live righteously, but can He bless me?" He can: He is waiting to bless thee. II. We have now to notice an EARNEST DESIRE. David, remembering the past, and fearing for the future, earnestly desires soul salvation. "Oh God! say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" 1. He desires salvation from the burden of sin. Even as a man working in a coal-pit, upon whom the earth has fallen, earnestly cries for help, so the Christian is in agony to be saved from the burden with which his sins have fallen upon his memory and his conscience. 2. We also have here an earnest desire for salvation from the power of sin. In the sad days of American slavery, I have read of a maiden being bought by a very wicked man for purposes of sin and shame, and she, weeping, as she was dragged along the road to his estate, shrieked piteously for a deliverer. Poor thing! the law gave the monster the power over her. But how

different when we in the bondage of sin, cry out to God for help. Christ comes and delivers his people from the power of sin. III. **THE DELIGHTFUL EXPECTATION OF THE TEXT.** It is to have God's voice to be heard in the soul. "Say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" There may be some here who cannot find peace and holiness, and who now cry for salvation. Losing your way whilst wandering in an underground cavern and your light burning out, it is delightful to hear the guide in the distance cry, "All right, my friend, I know where you are, and will lead you safely out." Likewise the promise is, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly return to His temple." Pray on, hope on, believe on. You shall hear His voice, for He hath promised. (*W. Birch.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **My soul shall be joyful in the Lord.**—*Life's joy*:—It is not often that we meet with a truly joyous face. We see many a brow curved with humour, and lips with their wreath of mirth, but the eyes seldom beam the glory of that quiet delight which is named in our text. Everybody has some joy; but in many cases it is spurious like a bad shilling, and unreliable like the grass which grows over the marsh on a moor. But real joy is wholesome, beneficent and abiding; and it is for all. It is seldom or never found in external things; it is an inward state of the soul. Joy may be likened to a seat under the shade of a tree to which you can go at once for rest, and it is as free as a street fountain with the cup hanging ready for the thirsty traveller to drink; anybody may take the cup and drink. True joy is not a fiction; to be expressed, it must be felt. As you cannot have a river without a spring or source, neither can you have true joy without its fountain which flows from the heart of God. I. **THE SECRET CAUSE OF JOY IN THE CHRISTIAN IS**—1. That he possesses all things. The great cry of the human heart is—"I want this; O that I could have that!" Our failing is discontentedness; the glory of Christianity is contentment, not empty and fleeting, but full, overflowing, and everlasting. Under the Atlantic ocean is a cable through which passes a wire connecting the coast of England with that of America, and though there are great storms and crashing icebergs on the ocean, the cable under the sea is undisturbed; the lightning message passes along the three thousand miles of wire silently and in the twinkling of an eye. Likewise, the soul of the Christian, no matter whether he may be in a dungeon, awaiting a martyr's death, or upon a throne, the object of the people's praise, is serene because it is in communion with God. 2. That our sins are all forgiven. 3. The sense of salvation also inspires one's soul to be joyful in the Lord. 4. The promise of heaven. Some of you may say, "What you have said is of no use to me, for I am not a Christian; I am not good; there is no chance for me." You think God must draw the line somewhere, that He cannot take you in; that He may receive other people, but He cannot admit you. Now the Bible says, "Whosoever will." You cannot be too wicked for God to save; for He is able to save to the very uttermost all that pray unto Him. Therefore, come. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 13. **I humbled my soul with fasting.**—*The duty of fasting*:—So said David. All God's faithful children, under every dispensation, have observed the same rule. So must each one now say, who hopes for the highest degree of blessedness hereafter. "Can none, then, be saved without fasting?" I have heard people sometimes ask. This question might be answered by another: "Can any be saved without praying?" The same authority has commanded the observance of both. But fasting is an unpleasant duty; and those who wish to escape from it, while they readily grant that it was practised by the Jews, deny that it is binding upon Christians. Did not our Lord fast forty days and forty nights, thus setting us an example of subduing the flesh to the Spirit, that in this way His "godly monitions" may be more perfectly obeyed? Do not the apostles tell us that they were "in fastings often"? Do they not enjoin it upon Christians to "give themselves to fasting and prayer"? "This may all be true," answers an objector, "but why not leave it to each one to discharge this duty when he feels disposed, and why celebrate the fast of Lent, which sprung up, perhaps, during the dark ages of the world?" In reply to the first question, I would merely say that if we wait until we feel in a humour to fast, we shall never fast at all. Hence the wisdom of the Church in appointing stated seasons for it, when we are bound to attend to it, or prove ourselves unworthy and disobedient children. Our Saviour said to His disciples (*Matt. ix. 15*). And from the earliest ages of the Church directions concerning this observance are found. But while

it is expected of all to keep the *fasts* of the Church, all cannot observe them alike. The sick, or such as are just recovering their health, may not be able, perhaps, to abstain from food; and they who are obliged to toil hard for their daily bread, require more to sustain their strength than those whose lives are less active. But all should deny themselves in some way. (*John H. Norton.*) **My prayer returned into mine own bosom.**—*The benefits of prayer:*—The ancient garments were loose and flowing, and fell in a hollow fold upon the bosom; into which fold were often put articles of use, or value, for the convenience of carriage; and especially when presents were made, they were frequently deposited there. By his prayer returning into his own bosom, therefore, David meant, that though it failed to bring the desired benefit to those for whom it was delivered, it should turn to his own recompense and advantage. Such is the case, more or less, with all the acts of kindness rendered to our neighbour; they conduce not only to his benefit but our own. Ye who take delight in the well-being of others, and make it a business in your life to minister thereto, know well the value of this grace to your own hearts; it is a perpetual source of consolation and satisfaction. And even if you fail in pleasing those whom you seek to please, or in benefiting those whom you seek to benefit; still the good to yourself is not lost; there is joy in the endeavour, independent of the result. The pious act to which the text alludes was the fruit of love, of the most disinterested and holy affection. David was surrounded with bitter and violent enemies, who daily sought his life; and the manner in which he expresses himself respecting them reminds us strongly of David's Lord. He lifted up his heart in supplication to the mercy-seat; he did all that in him lay. But his prayer was not granted, as neither was the prayer of Jesus for the reckless Jew. From this remarkable instance before us, I am led to speak of the value of intercessory prayer, of prayer for our brethren, and for all our fellow-creatures. God has ordained it (1 Tim. ii. 1). We know not what may be dependent upon our prayers. What good they may bring to them for whom we pray. And assuredly they bring much good to us. I. The prayer FOR SUPERIORS of every kind begets in us that spirit of obedience, which God has commanded, and which God will bless. II. Children pray FOR PARENTS. Who can tell the benefits which they themselves derive from this duty? On the other hand, the parent prays for the child. The child is wayward and wanton: the parent prays for correction and amendment; but they do not always come. But the supplication is not without its fruit, in blessed peace of mind from knowing that he has done his best: that his child was not ruined by his neglect to pray for him. And so—III. FOR ALL RELATIVES. The principle of mutual love is kept alive thereby. IV. But perhaps the most observable instance of all is that wherewith the text is connected, the supplication FOR ENEMIES. This is a peculiar exercise of faith: this requires a greater struggle in the inner man, to obtain the mastery over our own self-love; and to make us desire with godly sincerity the good of those who have injured us, and to entreat the Lord for it, as for our own favour and blessing. This is indeed a victory of the Spirit of grace; and the Lord honours it with a signal reward, and makes it productive of vast benefit to our souls. Such was the Lord's own example. Let us also herein follow our Lord. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *The remunerative power of charity:*—The psalmist is speaking of the ungrateful returns which he received from his enemies for many acts of kindness. When they were in trouble and sickness, he did not fail to intercede with God on their behalf: he prayed for them, and put on sackcloth, and fasted; "whereas," he goes on to say, "in mine adversity they rejoiced," etc. Were, then, his prayers all thrown away? Not so; he was persuaded that they would return into his own bosom; that the prayers, that is, which should be fruitless in regard to those for whom they were presented, should certainly produce good to him by whom they had been offered. Now, we do not think that sufficient attention is paid to the various modes in which what is done for others, returns, as it were, to the doer, just as though God regarded it as a loan, and would not permit it to remain long in his hands—for we hardly know the philanthropic deed in regard of which we may not prove the high probability, if not the certainty, that he who performs it gains an abundant requital, even if you suppose him not moved by the purest motive, or not bringing into account the recompenses of eternity. The interests of the several classes in a community, nay, of the various members of the vast human family, are so bound up one with the other, that it is scarcely possible for an individual benefit to fail to be a general; and if the good which is wrought in an isolated quarter cannot remain there, but must propagate itself over wide districts,

we may easily believe that God, who orders and appoints all things so that they work His own ends, causes much of this reflected good to fall on the party with whom it originated; and thus he who fasted and humbled himself in sackcloth finds that his prayer hath returned into his own bosom. If I support infirmaries for children, I take the best means of preventing our being hereafter burdened with sickly and dependent families; disease is corrected, and the injuries are repaired in childhood which entail on us, if neglected, a crowd of miserable objects; and what I give to the pining infant I more than receive back from the vigorous man. If I support hospitals for the reception of those who must otherwise perish unregarded, what do I but take measures to continue to his family the industrious father, on whom it hangs for subsistence, and whose death would make it a pensioner on benevolence? Then surely what I give will, in all probability, "return into mine own bosom," if it prove instrumental in preserving a useful member to the community, and prevent fresh demands upon charity. Neither does this take into account what ought not to be omitted—that there is a direct tendency in hospitals and infirmaries to the nourishing in the poor kindly feelings towards the rich; and he can know little of the mutual dependence of the several ranks in society, who does not know that money employed on the procuring this result is money at interest, and not money sunk. But let us now consider more particularly the case in which the motive to benevolence is such as God approves—man acting from a principle of love to the Saviour, who has declared that He counts as done to Himself what is done for His sake to the least of His brethren. We believe that even in the present life the remunerating power will have a greater sphere of exercise in this case than in any other. It is to be observed, that though a Christian will be ready, with St. Paul, to "do good unto all men," he will study with the same apostle to do good, "especially to those that are of the household of faith;" and if his charities bring him mostly into association with those who are serving the same Lord, and if, though he neglect not the temporal, he is chiefly instrumental in supplying the spiritual wants of the destitute, it is very evident that there will be that returned to him in the prayers and blessings of those whom he succours, which there would not be if the objects of his benevolence were all at enmity with God. But if we may contend that what we have called the remunerating power of charity is already in operation, who can doubt that hereafter, when we reach the time and scene, which are specially appointed for the Divine retributions, it will be proved to the letter that our gifts and our deeds have returned into our own bosoms. When we read that even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward, we are taught that God takes account of the minutest acts of Christian benevolence, and designs them a recompense, so that as not even the least can escape His observation, not even the least shall be without retribution. He annexes rewards to our actions to show His graciousness, and to animate to obedience; and, with this as the base, He may justly be expected to leave no service unrequited, and yet at the same time to requite in proportion to the action. But with all the reasons there may be for expecting the most exact retributions, who can doubt that the righteous will hereafter be amazed and overcome, as the strict connection is shown them between what they did and what they enjoy? (H. Melvill, B.D.)

Ver. 14. I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother.—*The duty of surviving children to the memory of pious and departed mothers:—*  
**I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT.** 1. It displays a beautiful combination of apparently opposite virtues in the same character. Undaunted courage and yet loving tenderness. 2. A gradation in the claims of relative attachment. The mother has stronger claims than any friend, though he be one "who sticketh closer than a brother." 3. The loss of an excellent and pious mother is a most afflictive calamity, especially at some periods of her children's life—as infancy and youth. **II. THE REGARD WHICH A BEREAVED FAMILY SHOULD SHOW TO THE MEMORY OF A GOOD MOTHER.** 1. Retrace with gratitude her loving care. 2. Recall to remembrance the efforts she made to promote your best welfare. 3. Imitate her. 4. Cultivate all those principles, and that character, which were in her, and which shall prepare you to meet her in heaven. (John Clayton, A.M.) *The death of a mother:—***I. WHAT IS THERE IN THE DEATH OF A MOTHER THAT EXCITES PECULIAR SORROW?** 1. The want of the expressions of

a mother's affection makes the heart bow down heavily for her loss. 2. The loss of a mother's care, and of its ministrations, excites this regret. 3. The loss of a mother's sympathy and its soothing expressions excites this sorrow. 4. The heart mourns for the loss of the counsels of a mother's wisdom. 5. The affectionate heart mourns for the loss of the lessons of a mother's piety. II. WHERE CONSOLATION IS TO BE SOUGHT AND OBTAINED UNDER SUCH A CALAMITY. 1. There is consolation in the thought that it comes to you by the appointment of God. 2. There is consolation in the thought that all the benefits which you derived from so dear a relative, are to be found in God. In Him every blessing which the creature can yield us is to be found in richer abundance, and in a nobler form. 8. Consolation will be obtained by you in the fulfilment of their wishes and purposes. 4. Consolation will be found in the imitation of their virtues. 5. There is comfort in the belief that a departed mother is happy, and in the hope of a reunion. (*H. Belfrage.*) *On the death of a mother:*—The death of a true mother is a great event in the life of any one. It can occur but once in a lifetime. When it takes place in childhood, it is a sore calamity. A father can never supply a mother's place; seldom can any one else but very imperfectly. I. A MOTHER'S DEATH REMINDS US MOST STRONGLY OF THE PECULIAR BLESSINGS CONFERRED BY GOD THROUGH THE MATERNAL RELATION. A mother's influence is the first felt: it acts at the very fountain-head of life, it is gentle, tender, winning. Her smile greets the first dawn of intelligence: her voice is the first guide and encouragement to infant speech; her hand invites and sustains the first infant steps. From the pious mother's lips her children first learn the name of Jesus, and the words of prayer; from her example and instruction they receive the elements of virtue. II. THE DEATH OF A MOTHER OCCASIONS BITTER RECOLLECTIONS OF FILIAL DISOBEDIENCE AND NEGLECT. III. THE DEATH OF A MOTHER BREAKS UP THE HOME OF OUR EARLY DAYS, AND MAKES US FEEL THAT WE ARE ONLY SOJOURNERS HERE. IV. THE DEATH OF A MOTHER, ESPECIALLY OF AN AGED MOTHER, IS ADAPTED TO MAKE US SENSIBLE OF OUR NEARNESS TO ANOTHER WORLD. Conclusion. 1. I appeal to fathers. Remember what you owe your mothers, and teach your children, especially your sons, the deepest reverence for their mothers. 2. I appeal to mothers. Cherish a deep and constant sense of your own importance to your children, especially to your sons. 3. I appeal to those who have mothers living, especially to sons in early life. I entreat you, each of you, as you value your well-being for time and eternity, study well the will of God concerning your duty to your mothers, and strive to fulfil it. (*J. M. Johnson.*)

Ver. 17. *Lord, how long wilt Thou look on?—How long?*—This was David's cry in his distress. I. A TRYING EXPERIENCE. David did not doubt that the Lord saw his trouble. He did not say, "My way is hid from the Lord;" but he felt as if the Lord was only looking on and not delivering him. As a soldier hard pressed by the foe might look for the expected relief; but it did not come. David wanted to hear the shout, "To the rescue," but he could not hear it. And he feels sure that it must be all over with him in a few moments. Now—1. This is often the experience of the saint in his struggle with sin. 2. In relation to his troubles. 3. To his prayers. How long they seem to be unanswered. 4. It is often the minister's experience. He longs to see conversions, but does not see them. II. THE CRY OF ANGUISH. Now this cry may be right or wrong: it depends on its spirit. It is wrong when it is—1. Bitter; when the soul has become soured instead of sanctified by affliction. 2. When it is deeply despondent. But it is a right cry when it is—3. The language of intense desire. Now—III. COMFORTING ANSWERS TO THIS CRY. How long, Lord? He replies—1. "Long enough to try your faith." He loves to strengthen the faith of His people. Hence He often tries them by delaying the answers to their prayer. 2. "Long enough to teach you your own weakness." 3. To make you value the deliverance. That which is easily obtained is little valued. "Lord, how long wilt Thou look on?" 4. "Until the right moment." Not a moment too soon for His own glory: not a moment too late for your good. Our clock is always too fast; we call upon the Lord and say, "Lord, now is the time, the hour to deliver has struck;" but no answer comes, because He keeps not His time by ours; and His clock still wants some minutes to the hour; but when that has struck, swift as the lightning flash He is at our side. Trust Him, then, believe. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come. (*A. G. Brown.*)

Ver. 20. They devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.—*Sin approaching the unsuspecting*:—"There is no temptation," said John of Wesel, one of the greatest of the pre-Lutheran reformers, "so great as not to be tempted at all." We have a vivid illustration of this in a picture given us by a late writer on natural history. When the wild horses of Mexico, he tells us, are grazing unconsciously in a prairie, there may sometimes be seen gathering in the distance a troop of wolves, whom hunger has driven out after food. At first the horses snuff up the scent and become alarmed, and as long as they continue so all is safe; for their fleetness puts a barrier between themselves and their assailants, which the latter are wholly unable to surmount. But so grave and innocent do the wolves look—so solely graminivorous and gentle—that their intended victims soon become relieved from all fear, and begin again quietly to graze upon the same spot. Presently, two of the older and more wary of the wolves stroll forth, as it were listlessly, and apparently for the mere purpose of pastime, sometimes advancing, sometimes retreating, and every now and then stopping to gambol with each other, as if to show their disengaged simplicity and buoyancy of heart. Again the horses become alarmed; but again, observing how very innocent and friendly their visitors appear, they fall once more to grazing secure on the fields. But the fatal moment has now come; and with an unerring spring, the nearest of the victims finds the fangs of one of his gaunt and wily pursuers fastened in his haunches, and those of another in his neck, and in a moment he is covered by the whole of the greedy pack that has been thus waiting till this moment to dash upon his prostrate frame. So it is that sin presents itself to the incautious soul. First it lounges listlessly in the distance, as if to show its harmlessness and disengagedness of purpose. Then, when suspicion is disarmed, it comes nearer still, gambolling about as if it was mere pastime. It is not till the soul feels its fangs that it discovers that it is now the victim and slave of a master whose bitter and cruel yoke must be borne, not only through time, but through eternity. (*The Preacher's Lantern.*)

Vers. 27, 28. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause.—*Sympathy with the godly*:—1. It is one mark of godliness amongst many others, to befriend the cause of Christ, and to further it in the person of His saints suffering for righteousness, with their best affection, for here they are described by being "the favourers of their righteous cause." 2. In the persecution of the godly for the cause of God's truth and true religion, all the godly are concerned; and as they partake of the sufferings with others under Christ the Head, so shall they partake of the joy of the victory, and outgate which shall be exceeding joyful at last. 3. The troubles of the godly are not so many, but room is left for sometimes prosperity, "for God loveth the prosperity of His servants," to wit, as it may conduce to His purpose and their good. 4. When any of the godly are delivered from their persecutors, all the rest of the godly are bound as they understand of it, to set forth the power of God, and His love and bounty manifested and forthcoming to His people. 5. Whatsoever opposition the enemies of Christ and of the godly shall make, Christ shall keep up the open profession of true Doctrine, which manifesteth the righteousness of God; leading men to eternal life, and bringing glory to God; for this is the undertaking of the type and of Christ represented by him, after the hottest contest between him and the wicked enemies. (*D. Dickson.*) Let the Lord be magnified.—*Magnifying God*:—I. HERE IS GOD'S FEELING TOWARDS MAN'S WELFARE. He has pleasure in his prosperity. This proves to us—1. God's interest in our existence. 2. God's goodwill towards our state. 3. God's evident willingness to help. II. HERE IS MAN'S TRUE WELL-BEING—"Prosperity." The true prosperity of a soul is its spiritual vitality, and this manifests itself—1. By an ever-growing love towards religious exercises. 2. By a deepening apprehension of Divine realities. That which was dark becomes light; that which was obscure stands out in living reality. 3. By an increasing delight in Christian work. A prosperous soul is active in the performance of acts of charity and kindness. 4. By an increasing development of a Christlike character. The prosperous Christian grows, and becomes daily more like Christ in thought, word, and action. 5. By a constant accession of peace, contentment, and joy. III. HERE IS MAN'S MANIFEST DUTY—"Let the Lord be magnified." It is a blessed privilege to have a God who is well disposed to His people. The imaginary gods of the heathen were always ill-disposed. They were gods of cruelty, malevolence, and evil, who needed to be propitiated by many a cruel

rite. What a glorious idea we have of God! One who has pleasure in the prosperity of His people. He delights to see them happy and growing in grace, and all good gifts. He will not that any should be lost. Surely, then, we ought to magnify Him—in our words and songs of praise; in our lives and example; in our characters and sacrifice. We should give our whole time and energy and strength to His work. (*Homilist.*)

### PSALM XXXVI.

VERS. 1-12. The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.—*A sharp contrast of sin and holiness:—*  
**I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WICKED** (vers. 1-4). Depravity is the sinner's oracle. Its impulses come to him like those responses from superhuman sources which command the reverence and obedience of mankind. He yields to the seductive influence, and presses forward in the delusion that he will never be found out. And so, the fear of punishment being dispelled, he becomes thoroughly bad in heart, speech, and behaviour. **II. THE DIVINE EXCELLENCE** (vers. 5-9). The psalmist begins with Jehovah's loving-kindness and His faithfulness, His fulfilment of promises, even to the undeserving. These fill the earth and reach up to heaven. They transcend all human thought and desire (Eph. iii. 18). Jehovah's righteousness. His rectitude in general is compared to the mountains of God, mountains which, being produced by Almighty power, are a natural emblem of immensity. Judgments, on the other hand—that is, particular acts of righteousness—are likened to the great deep in its vastness and mystery. "How unsearchable are His judgments!" (Rom. xi. 33). The next clause shows one of the most touching characteristics of Hebrew poetry in the instantaneous transition from the consideration of God's unapproachable excellence to that of His providential care, which extends to every living thing, rational or irrational (Ps. civ.; cslv. 13-16). The thought of these things makes the singer burst forth in devout rapture: "How precious is Thy loving-kindness!" It is valuable beyond all treasures, since it affords such a sure and ample protection for all who take refuge beneath Jehovah's outstretched wings (Ruth ii. 12). God is represented as a gracious Host who provides for all who come to His house and His table (Ps. xxiii. 5; xxiv. 9). They are sated with the richest food, and drink of the stream of God's pleasures or "Edens" (Gen. ii. 10). To believers, if they enjoy God's presence and favour, a crust of bread and a glass of water are incomparably better than a royal banquet without such enjoyment. For with Him is the fountain of all life, animal and spiritual. What matters it that all the streams are cut off when one stands near the fountain-head, and has direct access to it? But just as God is the fountain of life, so is He also the fountain of light (Dan. ii. 22), and apart from Him all is darkness. The believing soul lives in an element of light which at once quickens and satisfies the spiritual faculty, by which heaven and heavenly things are apprehended. **III. THE CONCLUDING PRAYER** (vers. 10-12). To his glowing description of the blessedness resident in God and flowing forth to the objects of His favour, the psalmist appends a prayer that it may be extended or prolonged to the class to which he claims to belong. This class is described, first, as those who know God, "and, as a necessary consequence, love Him, since genuine knowledge of the true God is inseparable from right affections toward Him;" secondly, as the upright, not merely in appearance or outward demeanour, but in heart. Great as God's loving-kindness is, it is not indiscriminate, nor lavished upon those who neither appreciate nor desire it. The last verse is a mighty triumph of faith. It is as if David said, "There! they have fallen already." The wicked may be swollen with insolence, and the world applaud them, but he describes their destruction from afar as if from a watch-tower, and pronounces it as confidently as if it were an accomplished fact. The defeat is final and irretrievable. "What is the carpenter's son doing now?" was the scoffing question of a heathen in the days of Julian, when the apostate emperor was off upon an expedition which seemed likely to end in



triumph. "He is making a coffin for the emperor," was the calm reply. Faith that is anchored upon the perfections of the Most High cannot waver, cannot be disappointed. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *A diagnosis of sin*:—The earlier verses of the psalm are concerned with an analysis of the method and destructiveness of sin. The first four verses describe the successful ravages which sin makes in human life. They give us a diagnosis of evil, from its earliest appearance in the germ to its complete and final triumph. Now how does sin begin? I must take some little liberty with the wording of the psalm before me. I suppose it is one of the most difficult of all the psalms to translate. You will find, if you will look at the marginal rendering in the R.V., that for almost every clause the translators have given us an alternative reading which greatly differs from the reading placed in the text. I choose the marginal reading of the first clause, which, I think, gives us the germ, the first appearances, the beginnings of sin in human life. "Transgression uttereth its oracle," speaks within himself in tones of imperious authority, lays down certain assurances, interpolates certain suggestions, and clothes them with imperial authority. The devil begins his ministry by oracular suggestions, by mysterious whispers, subtle enticements to sin. That is the germinal work of the devil; a mystic, secret oracle seeking to entice the life into ways of sin. The secret enticement is followed by equally subtle stratagem. "He" (that is, the oracle) "flattereth him in his eyes that his iniquity shall not be found out and be hated." Two things the oracle says, and he says them with imperial authority. First, that sin shall not be found out, and secondly, that therefore there is no fear of reprobation. It is only a repetition of a word with which we are very familiar in the earlier portion of the old Book. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die?" "Ye shall not surely die!" Now pass to the third step in the great degeneracy. The man has been listening to the secret oracle. He has been flattered by its suggestiveness. He is now persuaded by the enticement, and the moral degradation begins apace. "The words"—the first things to be smitten—"The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit." The first thing that happens as soon as a man listens to the devil is that the bloom goes off the truthfulness of his life. He now enters the realm of equivocation and deceit, his seduction begins to show its fruit at the lips. "He hath left off to be wise"; then he loseth sense; he does not now exercise common sense; he shuts one eye! His intelligence is narrowed, contracted and curtailed. But still further: "He hath left off to do good." The loss of brotherhood! He may continue to give money; but he has ceased to give self. The claims of philanthropic service no longer appeal to his spirit, they pass by unheeded and ignored. And now see what further happens in the stages of moral decay. "He deviseth iniquity"; his imagination becomes defiled. "He setteth himself in a way that is not good. His will becomes enslaved. "He abhorreth not evil." He has now reached the plain of moral benumbment; his moral palate has been defiled; the distinction between sweet and bitter is no longer apparent, sweet and bitter taste alike. He has no abhorrence of evil, and he has no sweet pleasure in the good. He has lost his power of moral discernment; he is morally indifferent, and almost morally dead. Such is the diagnosis of sin, beginning in the whispered oracle and proceeding to absolute enslavement, passing through the intermediate stages of deception and delight. That is the moral condition of thousands. It is all round about us, and when we are confronted with its widespread devastation, what can we do? The earlier verses of this psalm, which give what I have called "a diagnosis" of sin, were never more confirmed than they are in the literature of our own time. The literature of our time abounds in analysis of sin. If you turn to "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*," or "*Jude the Obscure*," you will find that Thomas Hardy is just carefully elaborating the first four verses of this psalm. But, then, my trouble is this: that when his mournful psalm comes to an end I close his book in limp and rayless bewilderment. That is where so much of our modern literature leaves me. It gives me a fine diagnosis, but no remedial power. But here is the psalmist contemplating a similar spectacle—the ravages of sin, and he himself is temporarily bewildered; he himself is bowed low in helpless and hopeless mood. What does he do? I am very glad that our Revised Version helps by the very manner in which the psalm is printed. After verse four there is a great space, as though the psalm must be almost cut in two, as though the psalmist had gone away from the contemplation of that spectacle, as indeed he has. And where has he gone? He has gone that he might quietly inquire whether the evil things he has seen

are the biggest things he can find. When the psalm opens again after the pause, the psalmist is joyfully proclaiming the bigger things he has found. What are they? "Thy loving-kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens." Mark the vastness of the figures in which he seeks to enshrine the vastness of his thought. "Thy loving-kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens," bending like a mother's arms, the shining, cloudless sky! Most uncertain of all uncertainties, and yet "Thy faithfulness reacheth even unto the clouds!" Those apparent children of caprice, coming and going no one knows how, are in God's loving control, and obey the behests of His most sovereign will. "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." How majestic the figure! The mountains, the symbols of the Eternal, abiding through the generations; looking down upon the habitations of men, undisturbed, unchanged, unmoved. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains! Not that everything becomes clear when a man talks like that; the mystery remains! "Thy judgments," Thy ways of doing things, "Thy judgments are a great deep," as immense and unfathomable as the incalculable sea. But then one may endure the mystery of the deep when one is sure about the mountain. When you know that His faithfulness even ruleth the clouds, you can trust the fickle sea. Where had he been to discover these wonderful things? He is not recounting a bald catalogue of Divine attributes; he is announcing a testimony born of a deep and real experience. Where has he been? He has been the guest of God. "Under the shadow of Thy wings." The security of it! The absolute perfectness of the shelter! The warmth of it! The untroubled peace of it! He has been in God's house, sheltering there as a chick under its mother's wings. And then he tells us what he received in the house, what he had when he was a guest, when he was hiding under the wings: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." "Fatness is the top, it is the cream of all spiritual delicacies." It is the first, the prime thing! "They shall be abundantly satisfied" with the delicacies of Thy table! "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." It is not only what there is upon the table; it is the conversation and the fellowship at the board. Thy speech, Thy fellowship, Thy whispers, Thy promises, they just flow out into their souls like a river, and their joy shall be full. "With Thee is the fountain of life!" He was beginning to feel alive again; he was beginning to feel vitalized and renewed. "I am getting inspired again." And then he added: "In Thy light," my living God, "in Thy light shall we see light" to do our work away yonder in the fields of sin! The very two things he wanted: life and light! Inspiration and counsel! Encouragement and hope! As the psalmist turned from the Presence Chamber to confront again the spectacle of depravity, he offered a prayer, and this was his prayer: "O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee, and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart!" And then, as though he was afraid that when he got back to the waste again, and to the sin again, he himself might be overcome, caught up in the terrible drift and carried along, he added this prayer: "Let not the foot of pride come against me." Do not let me get into the general tendency of things, and by the general tendency be carried away! He offered a prayer that these cardinal things, the greatest things, might abide with him, and that when he went away into the world's waste field he might be able to stand. And so this man came out of the secret chamber a knight of God! He goes back, like all men ought to go back to their work when they have been in the presence chamber of God. We ought to turn to our work singing, always singing, and the songs ought to be, not songs of strife and warfare, but songs of victory. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The character of the wicked and the prayer of the good:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WICKED. 1. Practical atheism. 2. Self-flattery. 3. Perverse speech. 4. Mischievous devices. II. THE GLORY OF GOD. Here the Eternal is adored—1. For what He is in Himself. (1) His mercy is not a mere sentiment or passion, subject to change, but a principle settled as truth itself. (2) His rectitude is as settled as the everlasting hills, and the dispensations of His providence are as a trackless, boundless ocean. 2. For what He is to His creatures. (1) The Preserver of all. (2) Their loving Guardian. (3) Their Soul-satisfier. Man's happiness is participation in God's own happiness. III. THE PRAYER OF THE GOOD. 1. The subject of the prayer. (1) The continuance of Divine favour. (2) Protection from evil. 2. The answer (ver. 12). (*Homilist.*) *The remedy for the world's wickedness:*—Consider the estimate here made of man's character and its cause. The language of the text is not that of David only, but of Christ, concerning the world around us. Man's transgression pos-

essed a language which spoke to his heart, and what it said was this, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Christ knew what the fear of God was, for "He was heard in that he feared"; not, indeed, with the selfish, slavish fear of punishment, which is incompatible with love, and impotent to secure obedience; but that holy, filial fear which is inseparable from love, and which is a comprehensive term for all that constitutes real religion in man. We know the power of this in man's character, its practical power in giving man victory over the world, and therefore when he saw the transgressions of men he knew that the cause was—"There is no fear of God." Then he goes to the root of the disease; he puts forward none of the plausible excuses which men make for themselves on the ground of temperament, circumstances, and the like: but he goes to the root, for he knows also the real and only remedy. All others are vain: whether they be secular attempts to improve man's condition or to enlarge his knowledge, or to improve the institutions of civil government. Men believe in these things, and despise that vital religion which can alone help. What man calls wisdom, and wealth, and science, can do but little good, for they all terminate with creatures; they do not rise up to God. There is nothing in them to alter the real character of man. The reason is, that man, practically considered, is under the dominion, not of his intellect, but of his affections. There is no truth, connected with our composition, that requires and demands from wise men a more accurate and painstaking examination than this; because there is a theory of right in men's minds, and they deceive themselves into self-complacency by the admiration of the theory, at the moment that practically they are transgressing it. However strengthened the intellect by natural learning, it is still too weak for the conflict. The attracting object, soliciting the affections, gains the man; and he exhibits another specimen of the acknowledgment of the celebrated heathen, who "Knew the best, and yet the worst pursued." What is to be done for him? "His transgression saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." There is fear of man; there is a desire to obtain the good opinion of man; but all these are too weak for the conflict. He is still a transgressor, because he is devoid of "the fear of God." The next verses of the psalm give a remarkable description of his transgression, and show that it is mainly characterized by self-deception. "He flattereth himself in his own eyes until his iniquity be found to be hateful." It is not perceived to be hateful now, because he does as the world does. There are transgressions in which no man can flatter himself that he is right, but there are others for which he does not condemn himself, because society does not. It is concerning these, particularly, that he goes on flattering himself. And where is the remedy? The language of the psalmist, immediately after this, points out the remedy. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." Observe the transition. From this contemplation of man's wickedness, he does not pass to a better class of men, because he was not contemplating that peculiar character of wickedness, in which man differs from man, but he was contemplating the root of man's malady, in which "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In immediate contrast, therefore, he refers to the character of God. Here is the only remedy—the character of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. "Mercy," "faithfulness," "righteousness," "judgment," "loving-kindness"—how are these glorious perfections harmonized, but in the Cross of Christ? Here, then, we find the urgency for preaching the Gospel among men. Here we find our stronghold of demand for every effort to promulgate the Gospel amongst our fellow-creatures. They who know the human character best, who have watched most minutely the turning point of man's feelings and his consequent conduct, know full well that it is the manifestation of God's love that wins the alienated heart and changes the alienated conduct. (*Hugh M'Neile, M.A.*) **For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.—The deceitfulness of sin:—**The deceptions by which the sinner thus imposes on himself may be very different and various, according to the circumstances and the dispositions of the persons by whom they are admitted, and it is not very easy to discover every one of them. There are, however, some capital and leading ones, pointed out in Scripture, or suggested by history and experience. I. A STUDIED INFIDELITY, AND AN AFFECTED ENDEAVOUR TO DESPISE THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THE BELIEF OF THE GREAT AND FUNDAMENTAL

DOCTRINES OF RELIGION STANDS; such as the existence and perfections of Almighty God, His moral government of this world, and a future judgment. 1. It is the height of folly, either to reject these doctrines of religion, or to treat them with contempt, until we can say we have examined the evidence on which they have been received, with the utmost exactness and candour in our power. 2. Without determining the degree of evidence, which is offered in support of the doctrines of religion, we may venture, nevertheless, to affirm, with strong assurance, that it is at least equal to the evidence upon which men constantly proceed, without the smallest hesitation, in all their other interests. II. A FOND IMAGINATION OF THEIR OWN INNOCENCE, EVEN IN THE COURSE OF AN IRREGULAR AND SINFUL LIFE. They artfully persuade themselves that there cannot be such malignity or guilt in what they do as that it should expose them to the displeasure of their Maker, or draw after it any great or lasting punishment: they presume, therefore, God will overlook the irregularities and errors of their lives, or find out some merciful expedient whereby they may escape with safety and success. 1. Notwithstanding the ignorance and corruption of our present state, so much of our original rectitude remains, that without any laboured cultivation, the consciences of men do still perceive a very odious deformity in some instances of wickedness; and lead, not only to a strong indignation against the criminal, but to a strong persuasion that Providence will some time or other interpose, and exert its justice, in his punishment. 2. The marks which God has already given, in the administration of His providence, of His displeasure with the sins of men. What extreme distress have some brought upon themselves by their intemperance; some by their dishonesty, and others by their immoderate ambition. It adds greatly to the weight of this consideration, that these expressions of Divine displeasure are made against such iniquities as are usually disguised in the thoughts of men, under the appearance of innocence, or weakness; as being only a compliance with the appetites implanted in our nature, and with the custom of the world, in which a man has no deliberate impiety and malice in his heart, no intention either to affront his Maker, or to hurt his fellow-men. III. A GROUNDLESS AND PRESUMPTUOUS DEPENDENCE ON THE MERCY OF ALMIGHTY GOD. 1. Although the mercy of Almighty God be infinite, as all His other perfections are, yet it can extend only to those persons who are the proper objects of compassion, and to those cases to which it would be worthy of Him to extend mercy. 2. Let it be observed, that abstracting from the displeasure of Almighty God, and supposing that there was to be no positive exertion of His justice in the case, yet the future punishment of sinners will very probably proceed from the nature and influence of wickedness itself (Gal. vi. 7; Prov. i. 31; Isa. iii. 10). IV. THE SINNER'S HOPING, AT THE END OF A GUILTY LIFE, TO BE SAVED, BY THE MERIT OF THE SON OF GOD, AND THE VIRTUE OF THAT GREAT ATONEMENT WHICH HE MADE FOR THE SINS OF MEN. If the sinner is not able to convince himself that the mercy of his Maker is sufficient, by itself, to ensure his future safety, he trusts, at least, to the all-sufficient sacrifice and merit of his well-beloved Son. But, according to Scripture, they only can be saved by the sacrifice and intercession of the Son of God, who are persuaded by Him to repent of their iniquities, to believe and obey the Gospel (Acts v. 31; iii. 19; Heb. v. 9; Rom. ii. 6). Were the matter otherwise, were sinners, continuing in their wickedness, permitted to expect salvation through the merits of our Saviour, Jesus would become the minister of sin, an establisher rather than a destroyer of the works of Satan; than which, a more blasphemous reproach could not be thrown upon His character. V. A PRECIPITANT CONTEMPT OF RELIGION, ON ACCOUNT OF THE WEAK AND WRONG REPRESENTATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE OF IT BY SOME OF ITS MISTAKEN FRIENDS. This instance of deceit unhappily prevails, even among those who pretend to superior discernment. But the weakness of it may appear upon a very small attention. Does a wise man conduct himself in this manner in any other action of his life? Does he despise the truth and usefulness of real science, because of the impertinence and pedantry of mere pretenders to it? Does he despise the useful schemes of commerce, accompanied with the solidest effects, because of the chimerical and idle schemes of mere projectors. VI. THEIR HOPING AND RESOLVING TO REPENT, AND TURN TO GOD, AT SOME FUTURE AND MORE CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY; at the farthest, in the last period of their lives, or at the approach of death. It is not proposed, at present, to show the extreme absurdity and folly of this conduct, by arguments drawn from the shortness and uncertainty of human life; the hardening influence of a sinful course, which gradually destroys the sensibility of the human conscience.

I would only desire your attention to the prodigious presumption of the sinner who defers his repentance and return to God to the last period of his life, hoping then to obtain forgiveness from God by his penitence and prayers. What the Creator can do, or what He may have done, independent of the established laws of providence, no man reckons it of importance to inquire; and any person would be deemed a madman or a fool, who directed the measures of his conduct by a regard to such unusual departures from these laws, as the history of the world may possibly furnish some few examples of. That man seems equally foolish and absurd who seeks admission to eternal life otherwise than according to the measures of His mercy, declared and established by the Gospel. (*W. Craig, D.D.*)

*On the deceitfulness of the heart, with regard to the commission of sin:—I. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.* 1. That all the proofs of the deceitfulness of the heart, which we mean to offer with regard to sin, may not be found in every person, especially in those who are under its power. 2. Many of those things, which are evidences of the deceitfulness of the heart, may be used as temptations by Satan. The wind of Satan's temptation commonly blows along with the tide of corruption within, whether by deceit, or by violence. Were not this the case, Satan would be divided against himself, and opposing the interests of his own kingdom.

*II. How THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART APPEARS.* 1. In raising doubts in the mind, with respect to what one is inclined to, whether it really be sin. 2. In trying to persuade him that it is a little sin. If the understanding will not be betrayed into a belief that the matter proposed is no sin at all, the heart will strenuously plead that it scarcely deserves the name. 3. By representing the mortification of sin as affording far less pleasure than the gratification of it. Nay, it will presume to urge, not only the difficulty, but the unreasonableness, the cruelty of attempting totally to subdue sin. 4. Sin is exhibited as far more pleasant than it is really found in the commission. The enjoyments of sin are like the apples of Sodom, which, how fair soever they appear to the eye, when grasped by the hand are said to fall to ashes (*Prov. xxii. 8; Rom. vi. 21*). 5. It represents a renewed opportunity of sin, as promising far greater satisfaction than was ever found before. 6. It pleads that one may indulge sin a little, without altogether yielding to the sin particularly in view. 7. It throws a veil of forgetfulness over the whole soul, with respect to all the painful consequences of sin, formerly felt. That loathsomeness of sin, hatred of self on account of it, or fear of wrath, which the person experienced after a former indulgence, are entirely vanished; and he now appears to himself as one who feared where no fear was. 8. It entices the imagination into its service. This is not only Satan's workhouse in the soul; but it may be viewed as a purveyor, which the heart engages in making provision for its lusts. 9. It engages the senses on its side. These are volunteers to the corrupt heart, which it arms in its service, and by which it accomplishes its wicked purposes, when enticing to outward acts of sin. For the voice of the senses will always overpower that of the understanding; if they be not brought into subjection, or presently restrained by grace. 10. In representing sin as properly one's own, as something belonging to one's self. 11. By insinuating that committing such a sin once more cannot greatly increase our guilt. 12. By urging the vanity of attempting to resist the temptation. It will plead for yielding to the present assault, from former instances of insufficiency in opposing one of the same nature. 13. It may sometimes endeavour to persuade a man that the present commission of sin will be an antidote for the future, because he will see more of its hatefulness. 14. The heart sometimes urges the commission of sin, as immediately clearing the way to the performance of some necessary duty (*Rom. iii. 8; Gen. xx. 11; xxvii. 19; 1 Sam. xiii. 11; xv. 22*). 15. By persuading a person to lay the commission of sin to the charge of the flesh, and solacing him with the idea that, although he fall into it, he does not really love it. 16. It dissuades him from prayer. Perhaps it reminds him that he has often tried this exercise before, in like circumstances, when he found an inclination to sin, or was assaulted by a temptation; and that it was attended with no success. Or, it may reason that if God hath determined to permit his fall at this time, prayer will not prevent it. 17. It strives to banish a sense of the presence and omniscience of God. 18. The deceitfulness of the heart about sin eminently appears in its self-hardening influence. Sin is the instrument which it uses in this work (*Heb. xiii. 3*). The strength of every lust is commensurate with the power of deceit. 19. The heart will even urge God's readiness to pardon as an excitement to the commission of sin. This is indeed a dreadful abuse of

pardonning mercy. 20. By endeavouring to drive one to despair, after the commission of sin, as being beyond the reach of mercy. III. MEANS FOR OBTAINING VICTORY OVER THE DECEITS OF THE HEART WITH RESPECT TO SIN. 1. In a dependence on the Spirit, resist the first motions of sin within you. 2. Beware of entertaining doubts with regard to what Scripture and conscience declare to be sin. To doubt is to begin to fall, for it implies unbelief of God's testimony. 3. Carefully avoid light notions of any sin. To think lightly of sin is to think lightly of God. 4. Guard against the solicitations of your hearts. If these promise you honour, profit, or pleasure in the service of sin, believe them not. 5. Beware of tampering or dallying with sin. Temptation is, to the corrupt heart, sharper than a two-edged sword, and if the point once enter, you may be pierced through with many sorrows. 6. Try to get all your senses armed against sin, or rather bared against it; for this is the best mode of defence. Like Job, make a covenant with your eyes. Endeavour to stop your ears against it. Strive for the mastery over your taste. Put a knife to thy throat, lest thou be given to appetite. 7. Seek a constant sense of the Majesty and Omniscience of God. 8. Pray without ceasing against the deceitfulness of the heart. 9. Improve the strength of Christ, and the grace of His Spirit, for the mortification of sin. (*John Jamieson, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good.**—*The state and condition of an habitual sinner.*—I. THE CHARACTER OF AN HABITUAL SINNER. He is one who "deviseth mischief upon his bed," his hours of leisure are employed upon it. 1. The time of retirement is the fittest and most likely season for religious influences to take place, and to have a due effect (Ps. cxix. 55). If ever our reason re-asserts its authority, it should be when there is nothing from without to interrupt its pretensions, or to oppose its claim. If ever religion can raise up our souls to God, it should be when our souls are free from all external impediments. 2. When this time of solitude and leisure is misapplied to contrivances for vice, it must needs improve those ill dispositions which it finds in the mind, and overspread it more and more with the contagion of sin. II. TO GIVE SOME ACCOUNT, AND TO SHOW SOME CAUSE OF HIS THUS PROCEEDING; OF THE ABUSE HE PUTS UPON HIS HOURS OF LEISURE. "He setteth himself in a way that is not good." 1. The abuse of a trust reposed in us all by a gracious Providence. We have a work to do, and a time assigned us for it. The work is improving our souls, and disposing all our faculties to a ripeness and capacity for eternal bliss. But how great will be the guilt which is contracted when the time allotted us to do the work of Him who sent us into this world for His glory, is employed to His dishonour, and in disobedience to His laws! 'Tis somewhat to forget, but more to betray a trust. 2. He who makes no advances forwards will certainly go backwards; he who has not laid in a fit provision for a good use of his time will certainly put it to a bad one. The ground we might gain in virtue will be gained to vice. III. A FURTHER AGGRAVATION, AND INDEED A FURTHER REASON OF HIS SIN. "He abhorreth not evil." His affections are all wrong turned; and, being so, it is no great wonder that they should run riot upon wickedness. 1. That he abhorreth not evil is an aggravation of his sin, for it implies that his reason is subdued to it, and grace extinguished. It is a common progress to defend upon principle what had its rise from frailty; to proceed from infirmity to wilful guilt; and, from sinning against conviction, to sin away all conviction. 2. If a man loves and likes it, he will, at one time or other, be gained upon to embrace it. For a state of neutrality between vice and virtue is impracticable, and impossible to human nature. He who "abhorreth not evil" will soon abhor that which is good. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-7. **Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.**—*Sky, earth and sea; a parable of God.*—This wonderful description of the manifold brightness of the Divine nature is introduced in this psalm with singular abruptness. It is set side by side with a vivid picture of an evildoer, a man who mutters in his own heart his godlessness, and with obstinate determination plans and plots in forgetfulness of God. We should go mad when we think of man's wickedness unless we could look up and see, with one quick turn of the eye, the heaven opened and the throned love that sits up there gazing on the chaos, and working to soothe sorrow, and to purify evil. I. WE HAVE GOD IN THE BOUNDLESSNESS OF HIS LOVING NATURE. His mercy,

faithfulness and righteousness are set before us. Now, the mercy spoken of is the same as the "love" told of in the New Testament, or, more nearly still, the "grace." Mercy is love in its exercise to persons who might expect something else, being guilty. As a general coming to a body of mutineers with pardon and favour upon his lips, instead of with condemnation and death; so God comes to us forgiving and blessing. All His goodness is forbearance, and His love is mercy, because of the weakness, the lowliness, and the ill desert of us on whom the love falls. And this same "quality of mercy" stands here at the beginning and the end. All the attributes of God are within the circle of His mercy, like diamonds set in a golden ring. But next to mercy comes faithfulness. "Thy faithfulness," etc. This implies a verbal revelation, and definite words from Him pledging Him to a certain line of action. "He hath said, and shall He not do it." "He will not alter the thing that is gone out of His lips." It is only a God who has spoken to men who can be a faithful God. He will not palter with a double sense, keeping His word of promise to the ear, and breaking it to the hope. The next beam of the Divine brightness is Righteousness. "Thy righteousness is," etc. The idea is just this, to put it into other words, that God has a law for His being to which He conforms; and that whatsoever things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure down here, those things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure up there. All these characteristics of the Divine nature are boundless. "Thy mercy is in the heavens," towering up above the stars and dwelling there like some Divine ether filling all space. The heavens are the home of light, the source of every blessing, arching over every head, rimming every horizon, holding all the stars, opening into abysses as we gaze, with us by night and by day, undimmed by the mist and smoke of earth, unchanged by the lapse of centuries; ever seen, never reached, bending over us always, always far above us. For even they, however they may dissolve and break, are yet subject to His unalterable law, and fulfil His gracious purpose. Then "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Like them, its roots are fast and stable; its summits touch the clouds of fleeting human circumstance: it is a shelter and a refuge, inaccessible in its steepest peaks, but affording many a cleft in its rocks where a man may hide and be safe. But, unlike them, it knew no beginning and shall know no end. Then, with wonderful poetical beauty and vividness of contrast, there follows upon the emblems of the great mountains of God's righteousness the emblem of the "mighty deep" of His judgments. Here towers Vesuvius; there at its feet lie the waters of the bay. The mountains and the sea are the two grandest things in nature, and in their combination sublime; the one the home of calm and silence, the other in perpetual motion. But the mountain's roots are deeper than the depths of the sea, and though the judgments are a mighty deep, the righteousness is deeper, and is the bed of the ocean. There is obscurity, doubtless, in these judgments, but it is that of the sea: not in itself, but in the dimness of the eye that looks upon it. The sea is clear, but our sight is limited. We cannot see to the bottom. A man on the cliff can look much deeper into the ocean than a man on the level beach. Let us remember that it is a hazardous thing to judge of a picture before it is finished; of a building before the scaffolding is pulled down, and it is a hazardous thing for us to say about any deed or any revealed truth that it is inconsistent with the Divine character. Wait a bit. II. So much, then, for the great picture here of these boundless characteristics of the Divine nature. Now let us look for a moment at the picture of *MAN SHELTERING BENEATH GOD'S WINGS*. "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." God's loving-kindness, or mercy, is precious, for that is the true meaning of the word translated "excellent." We are rich when we have that for ours; we are poor without it. That man is wealthy who has God on his side; that man is a pauper who has not God for his. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *Voices of a summer landscape*:—That from which the psalmist has borrowed his lessons in all probability lay before him as he mused. We imagine him at the time a fugitive from Saul. From the wickedness and craft of men, he turns to the goodness and faithfulness of God. I. *GOD'S MERCY*. He declares that it is throned in the heavens. These suggest—1. Its height. Climb the loftiest mountain, and yet they look down upon you. And so with the mercy of our God. It is the one all-enfolding, all-transcending fact in God's moral universe. It is high; we cannot attain unto it. 2. Its age and changelessness. The earth which the sky overshadows has seen many mutations. Beneath there is nothing

but flux, restlessness, change. But the sky has looked down on it all, serene and unvarying, amidst all the overturning and mutations of the countless years. Time writes no wrinkles on its steadfast blue. 8. Akin to this is another thought—the heavens are all-embracing, ever-present, and ever-free. “The noblest scenes of earth,” it has been said, “can be seen and known but by few. The sky is for all.” Be your dwelling-place on the bleakest and dreariest swamp, without a tree or a hill to diversify its surface, you have still overhead a picture of loveliness and of mystery as often as you choose to look up. Thread the narrowest thoroughfare of a crowded town, and far above the filth and squalor, between the eaves of the tall and tottering tenements that enclose you, there are strips of clear blue sky, reminding you that, whatsoever be the restlessness, the sorrow, and the vice below, there is nothing above but beauty, purity, and peace. So again with the mercy of our God; it is exceeding broad. It is the attribute of all attributes that is ever engirdling the world. Mercy is the very sphere in which we live and move. II. God’s FAITHFULNESS. Faithfulness has its close connection with mercy. Mercy is that which gives the promise, faithfulness is that which keeps it. Mercy determines the character of God’s dealing with a helpless and sin-stricken world, faithfulness secures their continuance. Mercy defines the nature and the terms of the covenant of grace, faithfulness provides for its steadfastness, and carries it out to its final completion. Faithfulness is mercy bonded and pledged. III. God’s RIGHTEOUSNESS. The element is one that cannot be spared from the picture. A God may be merciful, He may be faithful, too, but what avails it if both attributes do not rest upon justice? Yonder vault of God’s house, curtained with clouds and fretted with innumerable fires, is raised on its pillars. The everlasting hills bear it up, and their columns support the overarching dome. So with God’s righteousness. It lies at the base of His other attributes. It is as the mountains. 1. Stable. Nothing—storm or tempest—can move them. 2. Conspicuous. Long after the city’s spires have disappeared, and wood and river, field and vineyard have been lost in the distant blue, the outline of the sentinel hills may remain, massive and majestic as ever—every summit and jag cut clear against the sky. So again with the Divine righteousness. There is much that will pass away, but this, never. 3. The mountains are the sources of many blessings. To them we owe the moisture that laves and that gladdens the thirsty earth. If the waters go “down by the valleys,” they “go up by the mountains” first, and the rivers that fertilize our fields, turn our mills, and give drink to man and to beast, have their springs in green nooks and cool stony caverns on their distant slopes. Thus with the righteousness of God. So do “the mountains bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.” IV. God’s JUDGMENTS. From the sky, the clouds and the mountains, the psalmist now turned to the floods. Those, perhaps, of “the great and wide sea.” What are all God’s attributes that we have considered without wisdom to direct the whole? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom,” etc. We can see but little, but that is enough. Let us thank God. (W. A. Gray.) *Earthly emblems of heavenly things*:—The three grandest objects in the kingdom of nature are the heavens, the hills, and the sea: the heavens for their clearness, their height, and their all-embracing circuit; the hills for their strength, their security, and their shade; and the sea for its boundless immensity, its unfathomable profundity, and its inexplicable mystery. I. God’s MERCY. This means His loving-kindness to a sinner, His gracious disposition to receive again into favour those who were aforetime the objects of His wrath. Now, this mercy, says the psalmist, is in the heavens, which indicates—1. The conspicuous and prominent position which it occupies in the kingdom of grace. 2. Since God has set His mercy in the heavens, it must overtop the highest mountain of man’s transgression. 3. If God’s mercy be in the heavens, we shall never be able to get beyond it. (1) This is true in a very important sense of the entire family of man. For we live in a world of mercy. (2) What is true of the human family as a whole, is likewise true and pre-eminently true of the individual saint. God’s mercy surrounds him like the blue vault of heaven. II. God’s RIGHTEOUSNESS. No doubt the psalmist refers to the particular character of rectitude which God maintains in all His dealings with His sinful creatures. At the same time, we cannot greatly err in attaching to the term its New Testament signification of God’s gracious provision for saving men through the obedience unto death of His Son. 1. The great mountains, “the mountains of God,” as David calls them, suggest the idea of stability, or strength. Hence they are fit emblems of



the righteous character of God, which nothing that may happen can ever prevent from ruling in all His dealings with His creatures; and of the righteous work of Christ through which grace reigns unto eternal life. It is everlasting as the high hills of God (Isa. li. 6). 2. The great mountains speak of security or protection. Yet the security and protection of the hills are only emblems, beautiful and significant, but still faint, of that impregnable defence which is enjoyed by him who is arrayed in Christ's robe of righteousness, and who puts his trust in the righteous character of God. 3. The great mountains afford a shade to exhausted travellers as they pass along beneath a burning sky; and the like refreshment does a saint enjoy when in spirit he reposes in the finished righteousness of Christ. III. GOD'S JUDGMENTS. These are His ways, acts, providential dispensations. Rightly called judgments, as not being haphazard operations, but the solemn decisions of His infinite mind. Every step of the Divine procedure is deliberately weighed. God's judgments are like the sea in respect of—1. Mystery. 2. Profundity. 3. Immensity. They relate indeed to the little speck of time in which we live, and the little spot of ground on which we stand, but they stretch away out as well beyond the confines of the tomb, away out into the unnumbered ages of that illimitable eternity into which we are fast going, as the sea spreads itself out beyond the gaze of men. (*T. Whitelaw, D.D.*) *Two comparisons*.—I. **THY MERCY, O LORD, IS IN THE HEAVENS.** 1. Visible. 2. Lofty. 3. Encompassing the whole human family. II. **THY FAITHFULNESS REACHETH UNTO THE CLOUDS.** 1. The clouds are changeful. The small one becoming large. The dark one becoming clear. One joining another till the entire face of the heavens is covered with them. All these mutations required and produced by the Lord. He proclaimed, through Jonah, the destruction of Nineveh in forty days. The citizens repented, and the threatening was not executed. This shows that He did change His proposed course of action. All God's threatenings and promises are conditional. 2. The clouds at times move slowly. Creep along so tardily, as if they were unwilling to move. Seem to stop altogether for hours. Like the promises and threatenings of the Lord. Prayers not answered for ten, twenty, and thirty years. Wait on the Lord patiently. He shall bring it to pass. 3. The clouds sometimes move rapidly. Resemble war-horses rushing over the battle-field, or horses sweeping along the race-course. Koran, Dathan and Abiram, Achan, Ananias and Sapphira. Many sudden deaths. The sword of Divine justice is suspended over the sinner's head. It may not fall for a long time, it may fall in a moment. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh." (*A. McAulane, D.D.*) **Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.**—*Mountain meditations*.—I. **THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JEHOVAH WAS FIXED AND UNCHANGEABLE.** Nothing in the world so impresses the mind with the idea of unchangeableness as the great mountains. All things on, beneath and around them change, but they remain the same. And so it is with God's righteousness. II. **IT IS ONLY AS YOU COME NEAR THE GREAT MOUNTAINS THAT THEIR REAL GREATNESS APPEARS.** So also is it with God's righteousness. The man who has climbed highest in the way of righteousness knows best how great is the distance he has yet to climb. III. **ONLY AS THE SUN LIFTS THE CLOUDS ARE THE HIGH SUMMITS CLEARLY REVEALED.** And so in regard to God, clouds and darkness are round about Him; and it is only as the Sun of Righteousness arises, that we can look upon God. You cannot see the mountains without the sun—the moon is only reflected sunlight—and so all true vision of God is by means of Christ. (*W. G. Horder.*) *The mountains of God*.—I am not specially careful to inquire in detail as to what the psalmist refers to when he speaks of the righteousness of the Lord. He is righteous altogether. Now, just as every continent, and almost every country, has a chain of mountains running across it, or along its length, which is, as it were, the backbone of the country, giving it character, and fixing certain bounds, and providing the water-sheds, so the righteousness of God, the essential holiness of the King of kings, the inflexible justice of the great Lawgiver is as a mighty range of hills which runs the whole length of God's dealings with His people. I. **THEIR SUBLIMITY.** Come up into the hill of the Lord, climb these mountains of God, contemplate the righteousness of the Most High, who can by no means clear the guilty and will not wink at sin. View the vast expanses of His righteousness, and the towering masses of His holiness, and wonder, with a great amazement, that they have not crushed you long ago. Instead of that catastrophe you are permitted to climb among these highlands, and to sun yourself upon their summits. But oh, with all our familiarity of approach to God, let us

not forget how great and good God is. II. *THEIR PURITY*. How clear the air on those sunlit summits! How bright the sky above the traveller's head! I would fain enter, as far as it is possible, into a comprehension of the absolute holiness of God. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" III. *THEIR STABILITY*. A process of disintegration is perhaps always going on; sun, and wind, and rain, and snow, all these things affect our mountains somewhat, but despite that fact they remain, their roots fixed in the heart of the earth, and their peaks piercing the passing clouds. So is it with the righteousness of God. You cannot bribe God; neither threatenings nor persuadings will turn Him from His course. He keeps His promises to the letter, every one of them, and the covenant which He has signed, and which Christ has sealed with His own most precious blood, can never be set aside. IV. *THEIR MYSTERY*. One cannot climb even one of our own little hills without risk of becoming enveloped in the driving mist and in the falling cloud. Have you ever wondered that God is not found out by man and understood by finite comprehension? The wonder would be if He were. His righteousness is like the great mountains. V. *THEIR UTILITY*. They are ornamental, it is true, but they are even more useful than they are ornamental. God's righteousness is not merely to be looked at from a distance, wondered at, and admired; it is to be rejoiced in, and trusted in. It serves a purpose that nothing else can serve. 1. Think, for instance, of the shelter that is provided by the great mountains. 2. Although we can hardly say that the mountains provide pasturage, yet the fact remains that some of the best of land is found among the hills. 3. There is light upon the mountains, too. "In Thy light we shall see light." I have heard of those who have ascended the mountain over-night, that they might see the sun rise on the morrow. Things that were dark and inscrutable before will become comparatively plain when the light that is to be viewed from the peaks of God's righteousness shines forth. 4. The mountains of every country have a very distinct influence upon the peoples of those countries, just as the plains have. You will find a different race down there, where all is level, from those who dwell among the hills. There are the hardy and stalwart men, the men of brawn and brain. If we could only acclimatize ourselves to dwell as it were among the high doctrines of God's Word, and the noble thoughts that are in the Bible concerning our blessed God, how it would alter us; our very complexion would be different, our manhood would be increased, our spiritual strength would be intensified. (*T. Spurgeon.*) *God's righteousness like the mountains*.—God's works in nature seem to be intended by God to be to us pictures of His works in the moral and spiritual world. I. As we wander through the world from land to land they strike upon our view by their *PROMINENCE*. From afar we see them, conspicuous above tower and battlement, temple and dome. Such in its prominence is the righteousness of God (Ps. cxlv. 17). His dealings with His creatures illustrate the character of righteousness, the principle of rendering to every one his due. II. God's righteousness is like the great mountains in its *PERMANENCE*. The "cloud-capp'd towers" are dismantled and destroyed, "the gorgeous palaces" of kings fade and perish, "the solemn temples" are deserted and crumble into dust, but the great mountains remain. The revolutions of governments, the shocks of nations in deadly strife, the scourge of pestilence and the slaughter of war disturb not their repose, and even Time, the great innovator, in his destroying course passes them by. So God's righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. His righteous wrath "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 18). But, on the other hand, His righteous grace is revealed in our blessed Saviour, and all the pride and rebellion, the selfishness and hypocrisy, and sinful unbelief of the world shall not change His purposes of grace to them that trust in Jesus. III. God's righteousness is like the great mountains in the *PROTECTION* it affords us. What cause men have to bless God for mountains! They form a barrier and defence against the hostile elements of nature and the cruel oppression of men. How refreshing are the mountainous parts of India compared with the hot and unhealthy plains! Behold the range of mountains that separate Morocco from the great Sahara, and see in them the only barrier against the encroachments of the desert. Morocco is not a wilderness because of her mountains. Or, again, turning to the political map of Europe, why is it that while Poland is divided and despoiled, Hungary in subjection, and Denmark crippled and reduced, Switzerland still flourishes in her ancient vigour? Surely it is because of her mountains. Within those wild fastnesses Freedom has trained up,

age after age, a generation to call her blessed. Their mountains, rising in noble defence all around them, have bidden defiance to the invader and the oppressor, and the hardy race to-day rejoices in the freedom it so dearly loves. And "as the mountains are round about that land, so is the Lord round about His people" (Ps. cxxv. 2). The prophecy spoken of old has been fulfilled (Isa. xxxii. 2). We need protection—1. From the punishment of sin. 2. From the accusations of Satan. 3. From the ills of this mortal state. (*J. Silvester, M.A.*) *God's righteousness like the mountains*:—I. GREAT MOUNTAINS ARE UNCHANGEABLE. All round the Alps revolution has been the normal state for centuries. Thrones have tottered, governments have changed, monarchs have been deposed; but Mont Blanc has stood unmoved amid it all. Everywhere the great mountains "mock the eternities of history," and the permanence of human institutions. It is even so with God's righteousness; nay, infinitely more so. Infatuation has even attempted to alter it, infidelity has tried to impair its foundations, and subvert it; human philosophy has called it in question; arrogant caprice would carve it after its own designs; but such attempts are as futile as a man trying to move the Alps. God's righteousness, like Himself, is "without variableness or shadow of turning." II. GREAT MOUNTAINS ARE CONSPICUOUS. Travellers tell us the Himalayas may be seen two hundred and fifty miles off. And how conspicuous is God's righteousness. In the history of the world there is nothing more prominent; in all the great episodes of the past it is first to arrest our attention. III. GREAT MOUNTAINS ARE OBSCURABLE. Now, all is bright and sunny; anon, all is dark and gloomy. The intelligent traveller knows these obscurations are from beneath; indeed, he sees the vapour rising rapidly from the valley to thicken the canopy over his head. So the Divine righteousness is obscureable, but the obscurations are from beneath. The mists of distrust will hide it; the fogs of unbelief will shut it out; the vapour of doubt will shroud it; the dark, thick, murky atmosphere of scepticism, bordering on the very darkness of despair, will conceal it altogether. But, though you see it not, it is there. The traveller may put his hand through the mist, and feel the palpable rock. IV. GREAT MOUNTAINS ARE DANGEROUS TO EXPLORE WITHOUT A GUIDE. Some have foolishly attempted it, and valuable lives have been sacrificed in the attempt. And, alas, what a perilous position, and what a painful end have men come to, by essaying the exploration of God's righteousness without a guide! The Bible is the only unerring directory. Let us pray the Divine Spirit to guide us into all truth. V. GREAT MOUNTAINS ARE PROTECTIVE. It is pleasing to see many towns and villages in Switzerland and Savoy nestling in happy, peaceful security in fruitful valleys at the foot of the great mountains. Not only are they protected in some instances from easterly winds, and northern blasts, but these advantages have enabled the inhabitants to win and maintain an honourable independence amid the great military and aggressive powers of Europe. I was shown in the early part of the valley of the Rhone, two lines of hills which almost met, and there I was informed a comparative handful of brave Swiss defeated an invading army. And the spot is considered a sort of Thermopylæ in the annals of the country to this day! God's righteousness is protective and defensive. It graduates the present salvation and future security of His people. All His other attributes, pledged in their behalf, have their foundation in this. VI. GREAT MOUNTAINS COMMAND THE MOST GLORIOUS VIEWS! Views your imagination cannot picture. The varied tints of the sunlight upon the pinnacles of snow. The distant ranges, so illusively near. The spreading valleys and calm blue lakes. The harmony of the landscape, light and shade blending marvellously together. So from the mount of God's righteousness most wonderful views are obtained. Aspects of the Divine character, which cannot possibly be seen from the flats of reason and science. From the height of this attribute the agreement of all the Divine attributes is beheld, and the glorious harmony between the dispensations of nature, providence, and grace, is discovered. From this elevation may be seen "Mercy and Truth meeting together, Righteousness and Peace kissing each other." (*T. J. Guest.*) *Righteousness and great mountains*:—The Bible full of similitudes. Sometimes intermingled, sometimes in clusters. No book in the world is so rich in illustrations, and from it uninspired poesy has enriched itself with its greatest beauties. God has by these similitudes married earth and heaven, time and eternity, the visible and the invisible. I. That God's righteousness is like the great mountains BECAUSE IT IS DURABLE. Sometimes God compares, sometimes contrasts Himself with the mountains. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so," etc. "Moun-

tain may depart, yet His kindness shall not depart," etc. They are after all only relatively durable. The mountain is not the same as it was a thousand years ago. But God's righteousness is unchangeable, from the necessity of His nature: because not exposed to accident or peril. II. IN MYSTERIOUSNESS. There is a mystery about all mountains, but the greater the one is the greater the other. There is mystery about God's righteousness; about His person. Would it not be strange if we could see the full extent of God's righteousness? The eye of the soul, like that of the body, is restricted in its power of vision. III. HAS HEIGHTS DANGEROUS TO CLIMB. And even when men do scale the heights of Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, they could not live there. And men can no more live on the mountains of theology than on these others. IV. ARE A BULWARK AND A DEFENCE. And because Christ's is a righteous atonement, therefore its defence is sure. (*Enoch Mellor, D.D.*) *God's righteousness like the great mountains*:—The great mountains are planted in the earth for signs, and they are instinct with spiritual truth. They are the outward and visible manifestations of Jehovah's righteousness. 1. For like the great mountains, the righteousness of God produces a deep and awful feeling in the mind when first beheld in all its greatness and transcendent glory. Before the righteousness of God, the human spirit, filled with a deep and abiding sense of impurity and transgression, bows and worships. One hand alone—that of the Great Architect who planned and built the world—formed the soft ethereal substance into the solid earth, smoothed out the valleys, and lifted up the great mountains until they kissed the skies. And as no human hand could create, so no human power can destroy those great mountains. It is so with respect to the righteousness of God. It was God who planned it, wrought it out, and embodied it, and fully manifested it in the person and work of Christ. And no human power can remove or destroy the righteousness of God. The hand that planted can alone uproot. The power that establishes and supports can alone remove. Like the great mountains, that are girded with a strength which is invincible, and rooted with a firmness which is immovable, is the righteousness of God. "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." 2. But the righteousness of God is like the great mountains in another respect, namely, that of spotless purity. There the snow lies white and pure upon the crown and bosom of the great mountains, pure and white as it fell from the hand of the holy God. It is only where the great mountains strike their massive roots into the earth, that moraines or detached masses of rock and loose earth or sand are to be seen casting their dark shadows, and leaving their stains upon the pure whiteness of the glacier and the virgin snow. And it is thus with the righteousness of God. It is only at that point where it comes into contact with the righteousness of man, which is a filthy righteousness, that you see elements of impurity appearing, and appearing there, because the human spirit at its best is so imperfect, that stains and shadows lie upon it, and the very purity of God seems marred by the human soul that reposes on its bosom. But beyond the region where human imperfection touches the perfection of God, there is a vast and lofty range of spotless purity and Divine righteousness, where no shadows fall, where no stain can be detected. 3. Again, the striking comparison of our text proclaims with great power and beauty, that in order to attain the true vision of God we need to be lifted up. By our sinfulness we have left the "heights," and have come into "low places," where we raise to a bad eminence our lower passions and propensities. But, in the hour of our trouble, we instinctively look up to the mountains, feeling, like true hillmen, the attraction of the Fatherland, and knowing that there is help for us there. And that our observations may be true, we must not only take but keep the heights. Only when standing on the hill of God, when surveying all things from the great mountain of God's righteousness, do we arrive at the knowledge of the eternal truth. 4. God's righteousness is like the great mountains, inasmuch as it is the throne, the source of our help. The great mountains are said to prolong, and do prolong, the world's day, to do battle with its storms, to bring peace, to purify and lighten the corrupt and heavy atmosphere; they enlarge, defend, and bless the whole sphere of human life, and keep open the windows of heaven for the pouring down of its righteousness—its bountiful liberalities. The mountains are as the throne of help. The mountains defend and bless the valleys and the plains, as the heavens defend and bless the earth. The mountains stand for the calm and majestic home of goodness and truth and eternal might. The mountains are above the changes they control. The mountains gather and disperse the clouds;

they attract and revivify the air; they condense the atmosphere, and distil its living waters, and send them forth to refresh and fertilize the plains. The mountains are as the earth's lungs to restore to the atmosphere its used-up virtues. They brace the air, and keep the mildew from the growing corn. By the powerful influence of the mountains the valleys are always green, and food is abundantly provided for man and beast! And the mountains represent the help of other heights—the righteousness of God. For our help cometh from the hill of the Lord. (*Christian Weekly*.) **Thy judgments are a great deep.**—**A great deep:**—I. **THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE DEALINGS.** That wondrous ocean that occupies two-thirds of all the space upon this globe—how little is known of it! How true this is of the ways of God! They, then, are fools who pretend to criticize and carp and complain at that which He does. II. **THEIR CEASELESS ACTIVITY.** More than anything in all creation besides, the ocean, I think, is the type of tireless and perpetual activity. And it is well for us, if we can believe in the same thing as regards the rule and government—the beneficent providence of Almighty God. It is the pulse of creation, and is always beating, even when creation sleeps. It is the engineer whose hand is on the handle, and whose eye is on the steam gauge, however the passengers may read or sleep, or deport themselves in the ship or train. God is, God works, God wills, God governs, and that as the sea is never at rest, so God walketh always. III. **THEIR HEALTHFUL AND BENEFICENT POWER.** The storms of ocean have sent many a mariner to an untimely grave; but we know that the wild commotion of storm and billow, when the salt waters are churned into a seething cauldron of yeasty foam, means the charging the winds with the liberated ozone, iodine, and other health-giving elements of life; these raging tempests mean the keeping fresh and pure and salutary the waters that roll to every coast, the billows that lave and lap on every shore. A quiet ocean, a stagnant sea, an inactive deep, would mean ultimate pestilence, and death to the wide world of man and beast. No, the storm and tempests have their mission of good, their errand of mercy for man, and in this the judgments of God are a great deep, for its storms and tempests, its pains and disappointments, its wild waves of trouble as well as its sparkling ripples of peace, are healthful, useful, salutary and beneficent, both to body and soul. "He doeth all things well." IV. **THEIR UNCHANGING CHANGE.** The ocean's sudden, various, unaccountable, and seemingly lawless changes have, nevertheless, in and through them all, fixity and certainty. All are subject to ascertained laws than which nothing is more exact and sure. And so of all that happens to us here, nothing, however apparently so, is really of chance. "The Lord knoweth the way that I take, and when I am tried I," etc. V. **THEIR SUSTAINING POWER.** The sea is very deep—very mysterious, and at times very stormy, but what a splendid water-way it is! How grand a well-captained vessel, floating proudly over its surface to seek some far-off shore, and gain the precious things of far-off land! England is the England she is, rich and great, and powerful and prosperous, because she has learned to trust the sea. Yes, the great deep is a grand thing to sail on; but not so grand as is the providence and gracious government of God. Trust to that; put out on that sea; spread wide the sails of prayer to catch the breezes of heaven; steer your course by God's own sun and star; and be you sure of this, whatever of head-winds you may meet, whatever of chopping seas you may contend with, whatever storm and gale may menace your safety or toss your craft about—that great deep will bear you up; that Divine ocean will bear you on; that unfathomable sea will ensure you a safe voyage. Faith never suffers shipwreck. VI. **THEIR PRECIOUS TREASURES.** Precious things are hidden in mysterious recesses. Ocean contains innumerable buried treasures. Gold, silver, and precious stones are laid up there. But "how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee." Treasures both of grace and glory, for the life that now is and for that which is to come. (*J. Jackson Wray*.) *Preparation for dark providences:*—In saying—"Thy righteousness is like the great mountains," he asserts God's justice and equity to be fixed and immovable; too deeply based, and too lofty, ever to be overthrown or even shaken. In saying, "Thy judgments are a great deep," he is to be understood as declaring, that, notwithstanding the confessed justice and equity of God, there is much which is inscrutable in His dealings, much which is not to be fathomed by us in our present state of being. And when he proceeds to the simple, but touching exclamation, "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast!"—we may regard him as taking refuge from what is perplexing

and mysterious in what is plain and unquestionable; dispersing doubts which might arise from obscurities in providence, by reference to that general and gracious guardianship which proves God the protector of every living thing. Now it is not needful to insist on the truths of the text. They are sufficiently self-evident. We all know that there is much that is mysterious in God's dealings with men, and that consequently His judgments may fitly be called "a great deep." And we all know that it is God who preserveth both man and beast. But whilst the truth of the several propositions is readily confessed, and therefore does not need to be proved, there may be something in the order in which they are arranged by the psalmist, to suggest matter for important reflection. Besides the second of the two propositions may well obtain earnest consideration from us, for men are so often disconcerted and dissatisfied because of the fact it declares. I. CONSIDER THE REASONS FOR EXPECTING THAT GOD'S JUDGMENTS WOULD BE "A GREAT DEEP." Even now amongst men the dealings of the wise are often founded on maxims not understood or appreciated by the great mass of their fellows; so that conduct appears unaccountable, which, nevertheless, proceeds from a very high sagacity. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that God, whose wisdom is as far above that of the wisest of the earth as the heaven is above this lower creation, should be inexplicable in His actings, often doing that which we utterly fail to understand. And there may be other reasons for the inscrutableness of which we now speak. Why may it not be supposed, that God often of set purpose veils Himself in clouds, working in a mode which transcends our understandings, in order to conciliate our reverence, and keep faith in exercise? If we were always able to discern the reasons of the Divine dealings, who does not see that our own wisdom would soon come to be considered as well nigh equal to that of God? And then, again, what place would there be for faith, if there were no depths in the Divine judgments; if every reason was so plain, every design so palpable, that no one could do otherwise than acquiesce in the fitness and goodness of all God's appointments? It is very easy, if you cast but a cursory glance over the dealings of the Divine Being, observe the jostling and confusion which seem almost universal, and mark the unexpected turn which things take, to endeavour to assign the reason of this appointment, or to assign the possible use of that; it is very hard to feel assured that all is ordered for the best, that there is not a spring in motion which God does not regulate, and not a force in action which He does not control. Yet when we come to search into what was to have been expected, we do not find that we could reasonably have looked for any other state of things. Ought we not to feel that it is the very darkness in which the Almighty doth dwell which obtains for Him the reverence of such creatures as ourselves, excites their faith, and perpetually reminds them of a judgment to come? II. THE POSITION IN WHICH THESE WORDS ARE PLACED. They are inserted between two other propositions, from which they derive and on which they throw no inconsiderable light. Consider, then—1. The connection between the first two clauses of the text. Now, there is no better way of preparing the mind to contemplate the unsearchableness of God than the settling it in its persuasion of the righteousness of God. For we cannot be thoroughly persuaded of the righteousness of God, and not be thoroughly persuaded that, even when His dealings are the darkest, they have only to be seen in the light of His wisdom, and they will commend themselves as the best that could have been devised. And this is the reason why good men are, practically, so little perplexed by the intricacies of the Divine providence. They are certain of God's righteousness. In this manner the psalmist may be said to fortify himself for considering the inscrutableness of the Divine dealings by assuring himself of the Divine righteousness. And so, possessed of that which must keep him from sinking, he throws himself into the vast profound, and exclaims, "Thy judgments are a great deep." Aye, it is in this way that we should all endeavour to equip ourselves for trial. We launch into the great deep of God's judgments with but dim apprehensions of God's righteousness; and no marvel, then, if we are presently as mariners without a compass, and cry out as though God had forgotten to be gracious. But if we are busied, whilst not yet driven upon that vast ocean, with certifying ourselves that God cannot swerve from His purpose, that God cannot cease to overrule evil, we could not fail, when we found ourselves in the dark waters, to have our eye on the star which is to teach us how to steer. The imagery employed in this psalm is very beautiful. The psalmist combines the mountains and the deep. The mountains are to be considered as rising out of

the waters, and girding them round on every side. We know, from the parts of the mountains which are visible, that there are lower parts concealed from us by the waters, and just as confident that the lower parts make the basin from which the waters flow. And thus we should learn from seeing, when we look towards the heavens, that there is righteousness all around this lower obscurity which we are unable to penetrate, that the foundations which are beneath the waves are of the same materials as the summits which are above, and which often glow in the sunlight, though they may sometimes be hidden in the mist. This, we say, is the idea figuratively conveyed by the expression of the psalmist. Once give the character of "mountains" to the righteousness, regard that righteousness as immovable, and as girding round the whole economy of Providence, and it can hardly come to pass that you should be overwhelmed by the Divine dealings, however little you may be able to fathom them. And thus is the transition from the "righteousness" to the "judgments" of God in our text exactly indicative of the process which should take place in our minds. And now consider—2. The connection between the two last propositions of the text. There seems to be something very abrupt in this second transition, to pass from the great deep of God's judgments to the preserving man and beast; from so great mysteries to the everyday mercies which are showered upon the world. But even a believer in God's righteousness may, as he looks out upon the great deep of Providence, desire some distinct, some visible evidence of that goodness of God which seems so opposed to all this darkness and confusion. And this is what the last clause of our text gives him. For from all creation witnesses are summoned to attest the goodness of God. Man and every beast of the field, every fowl of the air, yea, all that passes through the paths of the sea, are to furnish proof of the watchful care and love of God. Will you say that all the animation which is kept up in the universe, and all the sustenance which is so liberally provided for every tribe, must be referred to the workings of certain laws and properties irrespective of the immediate agency of an ever-present, ever-actuating Divinity? This is nothing better than idolatry of second causes, and denial of the First; this is substituting nature—an ideal—for Him who is the Creator and Preserver of all. How comes it to pass that morning after morning the sun wakens huge cities into life, and causes the silent forests to echo with the warbling of birds, and calls into activity thousands of creatures in every mountain and in every valley, and yet, that out of all the interminable hordes thus revived at every dawn, there is not the solitary being for whom there is no provision in the granaries of nature? Can it be that God is unmindful of the world, that He is not studying in what He arranges and appoints, the good of His creatures, when He shows Himself attentive to the wants and comforts of the meanest living thing? It seems to us that there is thus a beautiful, though tacit, reasoning in the text, and that the second proposition is most admirably placed between the first and the last. It is as though David had said, "Come, let us muse on the righteousness of God. He would not be God if He were not righteous in all His ways; and therefore we may be sure that whatsoever He does is the best that could be done, whether or not we can perceive its excellence. This being settled, having determined that His "righteousness is like the great mountains," let us look upon His "judgments." Ah! what an abyss of dark waters is here! How unsearchable, how unfathomable, are these judgments! Yes, but being previously convinced of God's righteousness, we ought not to be staggered by what is dark in His dispensations. True; yet the mind does not seem satisfied by this reasoning. It may be more convincing to the intellect, but it does not address itself to the feelings. Well then, pass from what is dark in God's dealings to what is clear. "He is about your path, and about your bed." "The eyes of all wait upon Him; He openeth His hand, He satisfieth the desire of every living thing." Is this a God of whom to be suspicious? Is this a God to mistrust? No, surely. If you are able to say, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains," did it not quite prepare you for the fact, "Thy judgments are a great deep," every remaining suspicion will be scattered when you can join in the confession, "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Fathomless*.—I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE. But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? 1. Because He is the Lord. He is God, and therefore it becometh us oftentimes to sit in silence, and feel it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so. 2. God sendeth us trials of this sort for the exercise of our graces. Now is there room

for faith. When thou canst trace Him thou canst not trust Him. Here is room, too, for humility. The feeling that everything is beyond our knowledge brings to us humility, and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah's throne. I think there is hardly a grace which is not much helped by the deeps of God's judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, "No, I will not desire the reason; I do so love Him; let His will stand for a reason; that shall be enough for me; it is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." 3. We have sins which we cannot fathom, and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom. II. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP: THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING. Ships never strike on rocks in the great deeps. When the sailor begins to come up the Thames, then it is that there is first one sandbank and then another, and he is in danger; but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So in the judgments of God. When He is dealing out affliction to us, it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. For then he need fear no fall; when he is low, he need fear no pride; when he is humbled under God's hand, then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing, and under the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit they are not only safe, but they are advantageous. I greatly question whether we ever do grow in grace much except when we are in the furnace. III. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP, BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE. Down in those great depths who knows what there may be? Pearls lie deep there. And so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness, and what David calls "very tenderness," "for in very tenderness," saith he, "hast Thou afflicted me." We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive the present and immediate benefit of some of our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit; the benefit may be for hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. I do not know that that blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade, and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. IV. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP: THEN THEY WORK MUCH GOOD. The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste, a salt and barren wilderness, is one of the greatest blessings to this round world. If, to-morrow, there should be "no more sea," it would be the greatest of all curses. It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by and by in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the world—I might say the circulating blood of the world. There is no waste in the sea; it is all wanted. It must be there; there is not a drop of it too much. So with our afflictions which are Thy judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul's health, to our spiritual vigour. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," said David. V. IF GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP, THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF. We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples; that nations were kept asunder by the sea; but lo! the sea is to-day the great highway of the world. The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they soon flash across the waves. And so our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of His wonders in the deep. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 6. O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast.—*The providence of God in the preservation of His living creatures:*—As He made all living creatures, they are the objects of His continual care. As He made the world with astonishing magnificence; he presides over and governs it for the purposes for which it was made: His hand supports the fabric His power hath raised. As the production of the meanest living creatures is the work of Divine power and wisdom, so their preservation in life is the effect of His providence: and it results from the perfection of the Divine nature and providence, that notwithstanding the immensa



grandeur and multiplicity of His works, and the superior dignity and importance of some creatures in comparison of others, no part, though ever so minute, is overlooked. Vulgar minds are most apt to be affected with a sense of Divine providence, when they see something extraordinary and wonderful, and, as they imagine, beyond, or contrary to, the usual course of nature. But this is the effect of their weakness and ignorance. The constant operations and uniform course of nature are to be considered as the great proof and effect of a Divine providence, much more than any seeming deviations. Every one who reflects will be sensible of his own insufficiency to uphold his own being, or supply his own wants. We feel our dependence upon something above us, and are as it were conscious of a superior power which sustains and preserves us. From the whole we may observe—1. God's right of dominion over His creatures; which is founded not only on His creative power, but on His governing wisdom and preserving providence. 2. Entertain admiring and grateful thoughts of the Divine care and goodness in our preservation. 3. Imitate, according to our capacity, the Divine providence and goodness, by extending our care and contributing our part to the support and welfare of our fellow-creatures. 4. Rely upon the Divine protection for the future. Timid and anxious cares about our own preservation are inconsistent with true piety or a just confidence in the Divine care and goodness. (S. Bourn.)

Vers. 7, 8. **How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God.**—*The excellence of God's loving-kindness*.—I. THE SUBJECT OF THE TEXT. "Thy loving-kindness, O God." 1. Manifested—(1) In creation. (2) In providence. (3) In grace. 2. Felt or experienced—(1) In conversion. (2) In reconciliation and adoption. (3) In Christian fellowship and communion with God. (4) In ordinances and promises. (5) In heaven. II. ITS EXCELLENCE. This appears—1. In being manifested to the most unworthy. 2. In the multitude of blessings of which it is the source. 3. It gives security in all dangers, and produces confidence. 4. It is infinitely satisfying. 5. It is constant. 6. It is pregnant with prospective blessedness and ineffable glory. APPLICATION. 1. Does your experience lead you to admire this loving-kindness? 2. If not, it is a proof of slothfulness, and barrenness, and calls for repentance. 3. However much of this loving-kindness you enjoy now, it is but a foretaste. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) *The guests of the Lord*.—"How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O Lord!" Here is a burst of doxology born out of a great contemplation. This man sings but as the linnet sings; he sings because he must; his song is the spontaneous outbursting of a jubilant soul. So many of our doxologies are forced and artificial; they are not natural and inevitable. This man's song is the sure and certain issue of prepared and definite conditions. He has been surveying the wondrous power of God. And where has the meditation taken place? In the open air. He is a great lover of nature, and as he fixes his wondering eye upon its glories, Nature becomes to him a literature, and he discerns the character of God. It is a long and leisurely meditation. Moment by moment he seems to peer into ever-deepening depths in the immeasurable sky. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens!" Thy mercy is just like what I am gazing at! Depth beyond depth, and a comprehension that encircles everybody! And then he turns to the gathering clouds, brewing away in the south-west, and coming with their laden treasures to moisten the slopes of Carmel, and to drench the dried plains with their fertilizing wealth. And again, his heart reads the spiritual evangel brought by this material messenger. "Thy faithfulness reacheth out of the clouds!" The looming storm, the gathering darkness, are not chaotic forces raging at will without command; they are all in the charge of the Almighty God! "The clouds drop fatness!" Then his eyes wander away to the uplifted mountains, to Hermon and to distant Lebanon, or across to the hills of Moab. These are the emphases in the landscape, the abiding realities amid all its shifting moods. The river comes and goes; there is time of drought and time of plenty! Generations arise and pass away, but in each succeeding day the harvester looks up from the feverish plains and sees the cool and towering heights of the unchanging Lebanon. "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains!" Whatever happens, that endures! And so his contemplative eye wanders about in this great field of spiritual symbolism, till the heart glows and burns in the accumulated glory. "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God!" Surely we might imitate the psalmist in this fruitful method of devotion. Now this loving-kindness, so precious and so excellent,

represents itself to the psalmist as a home for the soul, a home in which all the children of men can be the guests of God. The loving-kindness of our Lord is just the guest-house of the soul! For what does the psalmist assure us we may find in this gracious home? First, it offers us shelter. "Therefore the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings." I think there is something very pathetic in the conjunction. After the towering mountains, and the far-stretched heavens, and the battalions of storm-clouds, and the mysterious sea, he mentions "the children of men." He appears to be half-terrified and half-confident in the association. Man seems so pitifully small by the side of the colossal phenomena of the material world. And yet, although the psalmist trembles for a moment in the sense of his own insignificance, he soon recovers the confidence of his soul. "Therefore the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings." That is the privilege of the sons of God. We can hide in the immediate presence of the Creator of all things. We can turn into the loving-kindness of God as little chicks cuddle under their mother's wings. There is room for everybody, always and everywhere. The peril or the crisis never finds us far away from home. But in the guest-house we not only find shelter and security, we find gracious and perfect sustenance. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." The Lord always gives His guest the best. The word "fatness" literally means the top of a thing. The top of milk is the cream, and it is always the cream of things with which our Lord entertains His children. "Thou feedest them with the finest of the wheat." He provides fat visions for the mind, delivering us from poor and thin conceptions of God, of man, of life and duty. He provides fat promises for the heart, saving us from thin and poor affections, from emotions in which there is no strength and no sacrificial ministry. And He provides fat energies for the will, nourishing us into powers of resoluteness which make us invulnerable in the pilgrim way. And with this fatness we are to be "abundantly satisfied." There are so many unsatisfied people in our streets, possessed of comforts, but no comfort, having found ease but not having gained peace. But the food of the Lord is to abundantly satisfy, and the heart is to be at rest. "He satisfieth thy mouth with good things." But more than shelter and sustenance are to be given to us. Our great Host entertains His guests with rare delights. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." This may mean the pleasures that God provides us, or it may mean God's own pleasures, or it may probably mean both. The things that give pleasure to the Lord are to give joy to us. In what does our Lord find His delight? "He delighteth in mercy!" And I am to drink of this river, and to relish the taste of it, and to find it a gracious delight. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth!" And of this river I am to drink, and my heart is to be glad at the prodigal's return. When I see another rejoicing I am to rejoice, and in my delight I shall share the joy of the Lord. And all these pleasures are to come my way like a river. They are not to be like a pool, exposed to the immediate drought, dried up in the critical day. And the psalmist, before closing his doxology, gives us the great secret of this all-sufficient hospitality. "With Thee is the fountain of life." All good is to be found in God. "All our springs are in Him," the springs of impulse, and desire, and will, and of all vitality. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The excellence of God's loving-kindness*.—I. TAKE THE WORDS DIRECTLY AND ABSOLUTELY, AS THEY LIE IN THEMSELVES. 1. God's loving-kindness is most excellent, that is, His favour and good-will (Ps. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3; cvi. 4). (1) In regard of the subject of it, by considering whose it is. (2) In regard of the fulness of it. He that hath but God's favour, what can he be said to want? There's nothing here in the world, but when a man has as much of it as his heart can wish, yet he will still want somewhat with it, and that sometimes which he can least be without; but he that hath an interest in God's loving-kindness, he hath all good things made over to him, so far forth as he hath use and need of them. (3) In regard of the efficacy of it, it is such as is of sweet influence wheresoever it is; it makes comforts to be so much the more comfortable, and it makes crosses to be so much the more tolerable and beneficial. (4) For its freeness and impartiality. (5) For its continuance and duration. Whom He loves, He loves to the end (Isa. liv. 8). 2. The psalmist blesses God for His activity of goodness to His church, for that loving-kindness which does put itself forth in His proceedings and dispensations to them. Now this also as well as the former is very excellent, and that in these regards. (1) In regard of the substance of it, and the

materials whereof it consists, which are various. God has shown His loving-kindness to His church in divers expressions. In giving them His Son for their redemption, and reconciliation to Himself; how excellent is His loving-kindness here (Rom. viii. 32). In the ordinances and means of grace. In His Spirit, and the workings thereof, whereby His ordinances and ministry are made effectual to those who enjoy them. In His care of it, and providence towards it. (2) In regard of the extent of it, enlarging and diffusing itself. (3) In regard of the peculiarity and appropriation of it. II. CONSIDER THE WORDS REFLEXIVELY, as COMING FROM THE PSALMIST. 1. Here is a sound judgment. 2. A special favour. David does not only speak here out of judgment, and the strength of his understanding; but out of sense and the certainty of his experience, who had found and felt the workings of this special favour, and accordingly speaks triumphantly about it. The frequent thoughts upon this point are such as may be very beneficial to us; and may have a very great influence upon our lives. (1) To quicken us to duty, and to make us so much the more diligent in our business. (2) To restrain us from sin, and to make us so much the more shy of our miscarriages. (3) To satisfy us in our afflictions, and to make us more contented with our condition. 3. Here is a thankful acknowledgment. 4. Here is a joyful publication (Ps. xcii. 2) calls for showing forth the loving-kindness of the Lord (Ps. lxxiii. 3). (T. Horton, D.D.) Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.—*The character and privileges of God's people*.—I. THEIR CHARACTER. They highly esteem the loving-kindness of God. II. THEIR PRIVILEGES. 1. "They shall be abundantly satisfied," etc. 2. They drink of the river of His pleasures. All joy is theirs. (D. Rees.)

Vers. 8, 9. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.—*What men find beneath the wings of God*.—I. SATISFACTION. Allusion is made, no doubt, to the festal meal of priests and worshippers in the temple, on occasion of the peace-offering. And there is also the simpler metaphor of God as the host at His table, at which we are guests. In either case the plain teaching of the text is, that by the might of a calm trust in God the whole mass of a man's desires are filled and satisfied. Heart, mind, will, appetites, tastes, inclinations, weaknesses, bodily wants—the whole crowd of these are crying for their meat. Now, where shall be found supply for all these? The one answer is, God; God alone is the food of the heart. Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh unto Me shall never hunger." II. JOY. "Thou makest them drink," etc. Perhaps "the rivers" point back to the rivers of the Garden of Eden, for "Eden" is the singular of the word here rendered "pleasures." Paradise is restored for them who trust in the Lord. The whole conception of religion in the Bible is glad-some. There is no puritanical gloom about it. True, a Christian man has sources of sadness which other men have not. Life will seem to be graver and sadder than the lives "that ring with idiot laughter solely," and have no music because they have no melancholy in them. That cannot be helped. But what does it matter though two or three surface streams be stopped up, if the pure river of the water of life is turned into your hearts? We hear a great deal about other Christian duties. We do not hear so much as we ought about the Christian duty of gladness. It takes a very robust faith to say, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." What a blessing it is for us to have, as we may have, a source of joy, frozen by no winter, dried up by no summer. We have but to lap a hasty mouthful of earthly joys as we run, but we cannot drink too full draughts of this pure river of water which makes glad the city of God. III. LIFE. "With Thee is the fountain of life." The words are true in regard of the lowest meaning of "life"—physical existence,—and they give a wonderful idea of the connection between God and all living creatures. Wherever there is life there is God. But it is of higher than the physical life that our text tells—the life of the spirit in communion with God. There is such a thing as death in life: living men may be "dead in trespasses and sins." IV. LIGHT. "In Thy light shall we see light." God is "the Father of lights." The sun and all the stars are only lights kindled by Him. It is the very crown of revelation that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. All joyous things come with it. It brings warmth and fruit, fulness and life. Purity, and gladness, and knowledge have been symbolized by it in all tongues. This great

word here seems to point chiefly to light as knowledge. This saying is true, as the former clause was, in relation to all the light which men have. The inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. Now the sum of the whole matter is, that all this four-fold blessing of satisfaction, joy, life, light, is given to you, if you will take Christ. And if you will not have Him, you will starve, and your lips will be cracked with thirst; and you will live a life which is death, and you will sink at last into outer darkness. Is that the fate which you are going to choose? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The fatness of God's house*:—I. THE CHILD OF GOD IS PROVIDED WITH WHAT IS NECESSARY. 1. The food is strengthening; he is fed with the grace of God. What Satan gives enfeebles; what God gives strengthens. 2. It is rich—rich as befits the house of a monarch, the table of a king. It is the love of God. Life without love is death. "Greater love hath no man than this, that," etc. And this is the assurance of God's love to us. 3. And it is plentiful. A dole would be more than our right, but God gives us all. Open then your hearts to receive His mercy. So shall we be content and at rest. II. WITH WHAT IS PLEASANT. "The rivers of God's pleasures." There shall be the sense of safety: elevation of thought and high communion with God and with the saints: foretastes of heaven. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *True human happiness divine*:—I. DIVINITY SUPPLIES THE SOURCE OF OUR HAPPINESS. It is "the river of thy pleasure." God is happy, the ever blessed God. His happiness is a "river"—pure, boundless, overflowing. What is this river? It involves—1. An approving conscience. 2. A consciousness of security. 3. A loving nature. 4. A beneficent activity. God Himself could not be happy without them. Man is happy as he participates in the happiness of God. II. DIVINITY LEADS TO ITS SOURCE. "Thou shalt make them drink," etc. The human soul has gone so far away from this river that none but God can bring it back. This He has done, is doing, and will continue to do, through Christ. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come," etc. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The fatness of God's house*:—A hydrant has no water in its composition. It is made of wood, iron and brass. But when it is finished, and the proper authorities have put it in its place, it is then that water may come from it. A burning-glass has no fire in it. It has only the silex and alkali, with its metal band and handle. But when it is properly made and holden, it will kindle a fire, because it brings the heat-rays of the great sun to a focus. But you would not expect to find any one so foolish as to keep away from the hydrant and die from thirst, because it has no water in its composition. You would expect people to go to the hydrant whenever they needed water, and to prize it because it is one of the constituted outlets for the waters of the lake. And you would expect them to use the burning-glass, and prize it, as the means of getting fire from the sun, to comfort them and supply their wants. Now, this house of God has nothing of grace, or righteousness, or glory in these beams, and boards, and nails. There are none of the waters of healing in these pews, and aisles, and this pulpit. None of the fires of heaven in their paint, and wall, and ceiling. But God has ordained this house to be the place out of which the waters of His salvation shall flow; to be the point in which the melting beams of His love shall gather as time rolls by. I. ADMIRE THE FATNESS OF GOD'S HOUSE. This includes all the blessings God bestows through His house. 1. Life (ver. 9). It is the life bought for us by the death of Christ, and brought to us by the ministrations of the Holy Spirit; the life which will go unscathed through the death that guards the close of this world, and pass on untouched by the blasting fires of the second death; the life which will grow on and glow on amid the beauties and glories of the New Jerusalem as long as God Himself shall last. 2. Love (ver. 7). The love of God Himself—infinite, undeserved. 3. Protection (ver. 7). Against world, flesh, devil. 4. Refreshing (ver. 8). This refreshing will remove discomfort, weariness, pain, weakness, sorrow and distress from the hearts of all who wait on God. It will make the soul joyful, singing through life, singing in death, and singing through the joys of eternity. 5. Cleansing (ver. 8). 6. Light (ver. 9). This is the light that "shineth in darkness," of which John came to bear witness. It is the true light. It shines on the darkness of our ignorance, and rolls away the deep shadows of error and prejudice, lighting up the pathway of truth so plainly "that he may run that readeth." 7. Warmth (ver. 9). Light brings warmth. II. BE ABUNDANTLY SATISFIED WITH THE FATNESS OF GOD'S HOUSE. 1. Life is the necessity of your soul. Not the life of the body, for that you have; nor the immortality of the soul, for that you cannot lose. But you need something within you that will live when the light

of this life has gone out. This life God can give you in His sanctuary. Put your soul in connection with Jesus Christ the God-man now, by a penitent and believing application for His favour, and you will feel the start, and thrill, and glow of this new life stirring in your soul. 2. Love is desired by your soul. The tendrils of your affection go out to find something to which they may cling, and on which they may climb. But you have learned that many of the objects of your trust prove unworthy; more of them insufficient, and all that are earthly, liable to wither and die. When you are tired of the disappointments, deceitfulness and failures of earthly love, you can come to the house of God, and here find the offers of Divine tenderness and infinite affection ready to encircle you in their blessed embrace. 3. Protection is needed by your soul. And here in this house of God you may experience the blessedness of possessing it. How weak you are to resist evil, your own experience has thoroughly taught you. You need protection against the swelling waves of this world's troubles, the mighty billows of the judgment day. 4. Refreshing is sought by your soul. Here you may have blessed foretastes of the glorious companionship and blissful employments of heaven. 5. Your soul needs cleansing, and you can obtain it here. The filthy covering of your soul will be replaced by the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. 6. Your soul needs light. And coming to this house of God it will shine on you. It is a certain remedy for all darkness and blindness. It shines on the future, showing you how to avoid the pit of despair, and how to reach the glories of the celestial world. 7. Your soul needs warmth. And you can get it in this house of God. This warmth is the kindling of the spirit; the glow that comes from the pulsations of life, from the embrace of love, from the consciousness of protection, from the cup of refreshing, from the waters of cleansing, and from the beamings of light. (*H. D. Williamson*). *The river of Thy pleasures*.—How much we can learn from a man's pleasures! I think it would be almost true to say that a man's pleasures constitute his measures. We may surely sample a man's character by analyzing the ministry in which he takes his delight. And how greatly our enjoyments vary. "One man's meat is another man's poison." That which gratifies one man is resented by another. One man seeks and finds enjoyment in the channels of the senses, in the outer halls and passages of the life, and never retires to the interior living-rooms of the soul. Another man feasts upon the spiritual essences of all things, and finds that the way of life is provided with rare delights. My text lifts our minds to the superlative plain of pleasure, even the pleasures of our God. And we are told that there are men and women who have been brought to the same refined appreciation, and who are able to enter into the joy of the Lord. Their kinship is so intimate that their delights are one. What God loves they love. "He delighteth in mercy." Here is one of the pleasures of our God. He does not turn to mercy reluctantly, as it were with a resentful palate; He turns to it eagerly, as a hungry man would turn to welcome food. Mercy is pleasant unto the Lord, and He rejoices in its exercise. How different are many of the palates of God's children! We cannot drink of that river with deep and delightful satisfaction. Our diseased palate craves sensations of quite another kind. To many of us "revenge is sweet," and so foul an enjoyment testifies to the depravity of our souls. But we can have our natures changed, and in the renewal of our being our palates will be transformed. We shall delight in mercy. It is needless to analyze the ingredients of a merciful disposition. It is perhaps sufficient to say that the behaviour of a merciful man has always two characteristics. First of all, he is ever seeking for favourable explanations of apparently unfavourable deeds. He does not jump at the first obtrusive explanation of things, and sit upon a throne of summary judgment. He is "slow to anger, and of great mercy." He exhausts all possible alternatives before accepting the worst. And, secondly, even when all alternatives have been tried, and the worst is still obtrusive, the merciful disposition is ready to forgive that which cannot be favourably explained. The merciful man finds his delight in mercy, and in being merciful he leans to his own inclinations. "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost." Here is another of the Lord's pleasures. Do I share it with Him? Do I drink of this river, and find delight and satisfaction in the draught? Ah! but there is a preparatory condition before such joy can be ours. No man can really take part in a victory unless he has borne some share in the fight. We can never really sing the song of the harvest-home until we have borne something of the labours of the field. "The Lord taketh pleasure in

them that fear Him." He not only finds delight in the homecoming of the prodigal; the delight is continued in the intimate fellowship of the subsequent life. The Lord loves to be near such people, loves to see them, and hear them, and to accompany them in their goings. Do we drink of the river of this pleasure? Do we find any delight in such people? I am further told, in the words that immediately precede my text, that the satisfactions of these pleasures are not to be partial and transient, but complete and abiding. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." We cannot say that of many of our enjoyments. We drink of the pleasures of the world, and they neither leave a sweet taste nor a contented rest. It is "as when a hungry man sleepeth, and behold! he eateth; he waketh, and findeth himself hungry." God has set the eternal longing in our spirits, and nothing that is merely temporal can appease the craving. But the pleasures of God bring abundant satisfaction. "Satisfy" is a great biblical word. The Bible uses it very plentifully, because everywhere it proclaims its abiding secret. How can we acquire the Divine appreciation, in order that we may thus drink of the Lord's pleasures, and find our delight in them? Shall we say that the taste is acquired? Let us better say that the taste is communicated. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." He will so re-make our lives that the palate shall be renewed. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

**Ver. 9. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light.**  
*Life and light:*—We think of Easter as the festival of the defeat of death: it is no less the festival of the glory of life. It is one of the many proofs that God desires and loves our health and not our sickness, our happiness and not our misery. From many causes, chief of all, the sin of the age, we habitually take too unfavourable and too unthankful a view of our mortal life. The cynic, the worldling, the noted profligate, the unreal Christian, seem to assume as an axiom that life is an unmitigated evil, and that it is only to be got through because we must, and as best we can. And even good men complain of life. But God hears and bears with it all, even as the mother forgives the fretfulness of her child. Christians should never cherish dark views. If we have them, remember they are not Christian, and they are mainly due to our own faults. I do not wish to indulge a weak optimism. I know the outward lives of many are dull and humble, and must be so, but what I would fain show you is that the externals of life are not life, and that as far as all the glorious essentials of life are concerned, you may still be blessed above all that this world can give. I do not shut my eyes to the reality of evil, but I still say that the sentiment of the bitter, worldly poet, "Know that whatever thou hast been, 'tis something bitter not to be," is a false and un-Christian sentiment. Almost all of us make too much of the few great woes of life, and too little of the multitude of its innocent pleasures. See these mortal bodies—how adapted to our needs. Think of how much of good attends each period of life from infancy to old age. Pessimists commiserate the lot of old age. So does not Scripture. It says that a "hoary head is a crown of glory if found in the way of righteousness." "Would you be young again?—So would not I." A beautiful and peaceful age in its calm and wisdom may be as the sunset to the day. And here God overrules our trials for good so that trials really become mercies. Look, then, hopefully, thankfully at life. It is not life which ruins man: it is man which ruins life. And too many do this, so that their life has not been as God meant it to be, but as a mirage of the deceitful wilderness, a ruin lost in mud and sand. The man has been a martyr of Satan, and not of God. But Christ would fain glorify our life. The secret of life, the secret of felicity is with Him or nowhere. But it is with Him, and it is for them that fear Him. It transfigures the world of Nature, making it the very autograph of His love. And God has given to us art, literature, science, appealing not to the senses but to the soul. How great are the pleasures of the mind: and yet more those of the moral nature, and the spirit of man is capable of joys more transcendent still; unattainable, indeed, apart from Christ, but in Him, open to us all. Think of but two of them, Hope and Love. How love transfigures life. Do we not know it, all of us, and many by blessed experience? And what is Easter for if it be not to teach us life? It is thus, then, that Christ gives us light, and that in His light we see light. (*Dean Farrar.*) *The fountain of life:*—I. ILLUSTRATE THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. As waters in a fountain are continually rising up and flowing forth, so life in God is naturally springing up, and ceaselessly overflowing. Life

natural, intellectual, spiritual. Life in its simplest and life in its sublimest forms. Thought carries us back to the infinite past when nought but God was. So it might have remained and the happiness of God none the less. But it pleased Him to manifest His glory by creation. First the heavens, then the earth, then the tribes of animated nature, all that roam in the forest, or swim the sea. Then man was created, as completing the chain of natural life, and at the same time connecting this world with others, that may be the sphere of intellectual and spiritual existence. Thus has the Fount of living waters filled this lower world with streams of life—and ever since the memorable days of creation—from Him have those streams flowed on, supplying all that is necessary for the unbroken succession, and whatever the form of life, however glorious, however beneficent, to God man is indebted for them all. But the highest life is the spiritual, the life of God in the soul. Now, man had this at the first, but lost it by sin, yet receives it back again through Christ. II. IMPROVE IT. 1. Let the Fountain of all life have the glory due to His name. 2. Let the powers of natural and intellectual life, which we have received, be dedicated to the Author of them. Let all we have be devoted to the Lord who gave them. But the subject comes home to us also with all the force of Gospel obligation. The Redeemer of our life says also, "Ye are not your own." 3. Especially let spiritual life be sought from God, the "fountain of life." 4. Let believers rejoice in hope of the time when spiritual life shall be perfected. (I. *Jacob.*) *The fountain of life*:—I. THE NATURAL LIFE. This is a noble gift, bestowed for noble purposes; our bodies are material, composed of matter, that is, of earthly substance; evidently made from the dust, as to the dust returning. Whence comes it, then, that one portion of matter should be gifted with life, and be endued with faculties which have a living power, whilst another portion lies dull and heavy and incapable, as it was originally created? The Church calls us to thank God for our creation: let us see that it be indeed a blessing. II. FROM GOD IS OUR PROVIDENTIAL LIFE, the preservation of our existence; and when we consider the numberless casualties to which we are exposed, this preservation is one continued marvel, nothing less than the constant exercise of God's almightiness on our behalf, by day and by night. III. OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE can be derived only from the Father of spirits, from "the God of the spirits of all flesh": our blessed Lord has placed this upon the clearest possible footing, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." IV. THERE IS ANOTHER LIFE which we profess to be seeking, another world to which we are on our journey; the very purpose and end of our present spiritual being. So says our blessed Lord, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." V. Then "IN HIS LIGHT SHALL WE SEE LIGHT." All the shadows of earthly imperfection will fly away before the sun of righteousness, which is the sun of glory. And as He led Israel through the wilderness, by the pillar of a cloud and the pillar of fire, so will He, by the light of His Spirit and His Word, lead every humble obedient servant through the world's wilderness, and bring them safely to the heavenly shore. (J. *Slade, M.A.*) *The fountain of life*:—We feel what life is better than we can define it. It is much more than existence. Life means unwearying vigour, full enjoyment, constant growth, abundant fruitfulness. 1. Alas, some have no life—no spiritual life; the physical, the intellectual, the social are there, vigorous enough; but there is death towards God. "Lay hold of the life which is life indeed," writes Paul, and many a one has come to feel that even the best of life without God is not "life indeed." "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Life cut off from God is but another name for death. 2. Some have deteriorated life. They have gone back. They are not what they were in their feelings towards Christ and His service. It is as when after months of severe physical strain we have no heart for anything; are tired of everything, and most of all of ourselves, and need to get away to some bracing mountain side to drink in new strength. As sudden torrents from the newly melted snows course down the half-empty channels of the plain, and sweep away the foul things gathered there, and waken into fragrance and vigour the drooping verdure on their banks, so the inrush to the soul of more life from the everlasting hills would sweep away our bad moods, and the fruits of holiness would once more deck our character. 3. And some have insufficient life. They thirst for more. Desire

for more life is characteristic of the higher piety rather than of the lower. The more we have the more we want. The further we get in Divine things the more we have of dissatisfaction with present attainment, and of longing for higher. We read promises of a heritage we have not possessed. Would that all this—this larger, better, richer life were mine! And, intensifying that desire, we see that we are confronted by temptation, or work, or perhaps by sorrows, which need more life on our part than we have. The old life is not enough for these; we shall fall in the conflict, or fail in the task, or be crushed by the burden without more life. But more life!—we should override our difficulties then, and smite down our adversaries, our character and speech would be charged with a resistless inspiration, and we ourselves from walking, or even climbing, should mount up as on wings to those high places which are bathed in the full sunlight of God's face. (*Charles New.*) *Being and well-being*:—Life and light are the greatest blessings of which we have any conception. All feel life to be valuable. What would life be without light? A world without light would be cold, dark and monotonous. God is the source of both. I. HE IS THE SOURCE OF BEING. "Fountain of life." The word fountain suggests—1. Causation. 2. Plenitude. 3. Activity. II. HE IS THE SOURCE OF WELL-BEING. He is the light—the blessedness of being. His revealed character is the light of the soul. Two things are necessary to make light a blessing—1. A healthy visual faculty. If the eye of the soul is not sound, light may be a pain, a curse. 2. Beautiful objects of vision. If the eye is made to look upon the monstrous, and the horrific, light will be a bane. (*Homilist.*) *In Thy light shall we see light.*—*God alone can reveal a God*:—Light has this property, that it is at once the vehicle and that which is borne by the vehicle: it is the revelation and its channel, and this twofold property of light remains the same whether we regard it as an actual emanation of particles, or only an undulation or vibration of some invisible ether itself at rest. And so with the revelation of God. No doubt He has revealed Himself by means of prophets, etc. (Heb. i.). But all such revelation was partial and incomplete; what the prophet saw or heard was only a glimpse of the real truth. Hence Christ was needed as the Revealer of God. And in like manner the Holy Spirit is the Revealer of Christ. (*J. B. Heard, M.A.*) *Light in God's light*:—I. IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE SCRIPTURE WE SEE LIGHT ON HUMAN NATURE AND ON HUMAN LIFE. Scripture contains God's solution of man's profoundest mysteries. The light which earth could not supply has been revealed from above. The Scriptures are not only a revelation of God to man, they are a revelation of man to himself. In the light of Divine truth our mysteries are solved, or souls are quieted, we emerge out of the darkness to follow Him who is the Light of the world. We feel that we are not left to our own fancies, to the mere phantoms of our own imagination; but that over all, guiding all, and allowing us to note His ways, is the Divine care and guidance of the living God. II. IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE ATONEMENT WE SEE THE LIGHT OF HUMAN SALVATION. Here is heaven's cure of earth's deep sorrows, God's solution of earth's blackest mystery. III. IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE PROMISES WE SEE LIGHT ON HUMAN ADVERSITY AND CARE. They assure us that every care is under Divine control, that every trial has its purpose, and that no burden too great shall ever rest upon our hearts. IV. IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE REVELATION WE SEE LIGHT ON HUMAN DESTINY. To unassisted man there is no darkness so dense as that which rests on the future. We cannot anticipate the conclusion of a single hour. But on this darkness there is light. If a man die we know he will live again; if a man die in Christ he shall live for ever with Christ. (*W. H. King.*) *In the light of God*:—The picture in the mind of him who wrote this psalm is very clear. Men are looking for light. With that insatiable passion which belongs to their humanity, they are running hither and thither seeking to know. And he who writes is in true sympathy with their search. To him too light seems the most precious thing on earth. Knowledge appears to him the treasure which is most worth possessing. But it seems to him that there is something which needs to be suggested to these searchers after light. They appear to him to be questioning this thing and that thing, as if the secret of its being, its power to be understood and comprehended, the light with which it ought to shine, were something which it carried in itself. He sees things differently. To him everything is comprehensible and capable of being understood only as it exists within the great unfolding presence of God. The first thing for any man to do who wanted knowledge was to put himself under God, to make himself God's



man; because both he who wanted to know and that which he wanted to know had God for their true element, and were their best and did their best only as they lived in Him. I. FOUR FACTS CONCERNING HUMAN KNOWLEDGE WHICH CONFIRM THE DOCTRINE OF THE PSALM. 1. The constant sense of the essential unity of knowledge. Men study many things. Each man finds for a time contentment in his special science in the mastery of his peculiar facts; but as each man goes deeper into the knowledge of the chosen subject of his study, he becomes aware of how impossible it is for him to know that subject well, unless he knows far more than that. All truth makes one great whole; and no student of truth rightly masters his own special study unless he at least constantly remembers that it is only one part of the vast unity of knowledge, one strain in the universal music, one ray in the complete and perfect light. 2. A second fact with regard to human knowledge is its need of inspiration and elevation from some pure and spiritual purpose. It is a fact which is assured by all the testimony of man's experience of study, that, not upon the lower grounds of economy and the usefulness of knowledge to man's physical and social wants, but by some sense of a preciousness inherent in itself, of a fitness between it and the nature of man, of a glory in seeking it and a delight in finding it for its own pure sake, that only so have all the great revelations of truth come to mankind. 3. Another characteristic of the best search after wisdom is the way in which it awakens the sense of obedience. In other words, all of man's loftiest search for knowledge has always seemed to be aware, not merely of two parties to the great transaction, but also of a third—not merely of a knowledge to be sought and of a man to win it, but also of a knowledge-giver, who was to stand between the treasure and the needy human life, and give to the obedient humanity the boon it sought. 4. Closely allied to this fact is the other one which yet remains to be mentioned with regard to the search of man after knowledge, which is the constant tendency which it has always shown to connect itself with moral character. All the old initiations to the mysteries of knowledge bore knowledge to this instinct. The man to whom the deepest known secrets of things were to be opened to-morrow must be purified to-night by lustrations that should signify his inner baptism. II. IS THERE NO ONE CONCEPTION IN WHICH THESE FOUR CONVICTIONS ALL UNITE, and in whose embrace they become not scattered discoveries or results of various experience, but parts of one complete idea which needs and which harmonizes them all? If it be true that in the thought of God most simply and broadly apprehended—in the thought, that is, of a great, strong, loving Father, who knows all truth, and loves all men, and feeds men with truth as a father feeds his children with bread, making them with each new food fit for a richer food which He has still to give them—these four conceptions find their meeting-place; if as the young light-seeker goes with these four convictions working together in his soul they almost necessarily seek one another and unite into what is at first the dream, and by and by becomes the faith of a personal presence, lofty, divine, loving and wise; if this is true, have we not reached as the result of all this long analysis something like that which David puts with such majestic simplicity in his glowing verse. The combination of these consciousnesses makes, almost of necessity, the consciousness of God. As they are necessary to the search for light, so is the God in whom they meet the true inspirer and helper of the eternal search. Look at the life of Jesus Christ. He knew the streets of Jerusalem and the lanes of Galilee and the history of His mysterious Hebrew people, and the hearts of the lilies and the souls of men; but He knew them all differently from the way in which the Hebrew scribes and scholars knew them. To Him they were all full of light. There is no other description of His knowledge that can tell its special and peculiar character like that. It was all full of light. It was full also of God. He knew everything as God's child in God's house. It was God's light in which He saw the deeper light in everything. Picture Jesus of Nazareth set down in Rome with all the flashing splendour of imperial power all around him! or in Athens, with the wisdom of the philosophers on every side. Would the young Jew have cast his faith away? Too real for him the visions that had come to him in Nazareth! Too real for him the glory of His Father, which had filled His Father's house! He would have laid fresh hold upon that truth and love which he had never so needed until now. He would have stood undazzled in the Roman glory, unpuzzled in the Grecian wisdom, because He would have known that in His heart He carried the light by which they should give light

to Him. The knowledge of God lies behind everything, behind all knowledge, all skill, all life. That is the sum of the whole matter. The knowledge of God! And then there comes the great truth, which all religions have dimly felt, but which Christianity has made the very watchword of its life, the truth that it is only by the soul that God is really known; only by the experiences of the soul, only by penitence for sin, only by patient struggle after holiness, only by trust, by hope, by love does God make Himself known to man. So may He give us all the grace to know Him more and more. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*)

Vers. 10-12. **O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee.**—

1. The true mark of a godly man standeth in the conjunction of faith in God with sincere study of obedience to him, for "he is the man that knoweth God, and is upright in heart." 2. Albeit, what the believer hath found in God by experience, he may expect it shall be continued to him, both for his entertainment by God, and defence and deliverance in his righteous cause from his enemies; yet must he follow his confidence with prayer, "O continue Thy loving-kindness." 3. As we have no right to any benefit, but in so far as we are of the number of upright-hearted believers, so should we seek every benefit we would have, as being of this number, and as seeking that others may be sharers with us, as David doth before. 4. It is the Lord only who can divert proud persecutors, that they hurt not His children, and it is the Lord only who can keep His children in the course of faith and obedience, when the wicked employ their power against them. 5. The ruin of the enemies of the godly is as certain as if it were already past; yea, faith may look upon it through the prospect of the Word of God, as if it were to be seen and pointed out to others to behold with their eyes. There are the workers of iniquity fallen. 6. The fall of the wicked is not like the fall of the godly, for though the godly fall sundry times, yet they recover their feet again; but a fall is prepared for the wicked, after which they shall not recover themselves, "They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise." (*D. Dickson.*)

## PSALM XXXVII.

VERS. 1-12. **Fret not thyself because of evil-doers.**—*Fret not:*—There are many who suppose that it is well-nigh impossible to pass the time of our sojourning here without some degree of anxiety and depression of spirit. I grant you these feelings will come to us, but we are not obliged to welcome them. Luther quaintly said that, whereas we cannot prevent the birds from hovering over and flying round about our heads, we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair. The Lord will not hold us accountable for the suggestions that the devil makes, or our own evil hearts produce, but He does hold us responsible for yielding to those suggestions, and nourishing them. I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPLAINT. Worrying, murmuring, or fretting, is certainly a malady. It must not be regarded as a mere circumstance that afflicts us from without. It is a deep-seated complaint that reigns within. One of the old Puritans says, of one who was always complaining, that he was "sick of the frets." He recognized that it was an inward ailment, affecting both soul and body. The root of the mischief was in the rebellious heart. 1. What is the nature of this complaint? It is of the nature of a fever. "Fret not thyself," or as it might be read, "Do not grow hot, inflame not thyself, because of evil-doers." Leave to the sea to fret, and fume, and rage, and roar. Leave to the wicked, of whom the troubled sea is so apt an emblem, to toss to and fro, and cast up mire and dirt. Leave to the caged bird, that has no wisdom, to beat itself against the bars and make its incarceration still more unendurable; but for you who are already God's, who have such a Father and Friend, and such a home, to which you are each moment coming nearer, for you to fret is clean contrary to the spirit of the Gospel; and to the grace which is in Christ Jesus. 2. What are the causes of this complaint? (1) The prosperity of the wicked. I do not know of anything more likely to

contribute to envy—which is nearly always an accompaniment of fretting—than a view of the prosperity of the wicked, that is if that view is a one-sided and short-sided one, as it generally is. The wicked spreads himself like a green bay tree, everything seems to go well with him. But he is a stranger to the one thing needful. He is altogether unacquainted with the joys we know, and what shall his end be? Have you ever found it in your heart to envy the apparent riches of the stage king, who struts his little hour behind the footlights with crown, and robes, and sceptre, and I know not what? (2) The care that seems inseparable from daily life. So long as we dwell in the land there must be the question of being fed and clothed. I had almost said that religion is a farce and a fraud unless it stoops with me to such matters as these. It does so. (3) There is another matter that mightily troubles some people, viz. the safeguarding of their reputation. Well, but let not this give rise to fretting and to distrust of God (vers. 5, 6). What reputation we have is due to God's grace. If He has made it, He will keep it. Your reputation is not of half so much account as are God's cause, etc. 3. What are the symptoms of this disease. (1) It is generally accompanied by envy—"neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Be on the look-out against that green-eyed monster jealousy, for it works havoc in the heart, and havoc everywhere. (2) It is accompanied also by loss of appetite—that is, for the things of God. If we give way to repining, we shall not care for God's Word, prayer will become almost impossible, the Gospel itself will lose its zest. (3) Accompanying this fever there is, of course, a very high temperature. It is very easy, when you are in this state of mind, to get angry, and very difficult to cease from wrath. (4) There is a consuming thirst with this fretting fever, a longing for something one has not got, a parching of the tongue and a drying of the lip, almost unbearable. (5) The vision is impaired; we do not see things clearly. (6) There is loss of memory, for we forget the mercies which have gone before, a recollection of which would help us to bear the troubles of the present. II. THE PRESCRIPTION. 1. The first item is trust in the Lord. Faith cures fretting. I believe in the "faith cure"—not as some administer it, but as God administers it. It is the only cure for worrying. If thou trustest all shall be well. 2. Do good. This is the second ingredient in the prescription. Do not give up, do not yield to fear. Do good; get to some practical work for God; continue in the path of daily duty, take spiritual exercise. 3. Diet is a very important matter in fever cases. It reads in the original, "Thou shalt be fed with truth." Oh, the patient begins to get better at once, if he is fed on faithfulness. If you eat God's truth and live on His Word, and drink in His promises, recovery is sure. 4. "Delight thyself also in the Lord." Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. "God writes straight on crooked lines;" delight in Him if you cannot delight in anybody else; delight in Him if you find no joy in yourself. 5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Not merely petition the King and then go on worrying, but roll the burden upon the Lord. Then the matter becomes His rather than yours; He accepts the responsibility which is too heavy for you. Too often we shoulder the load again. 6. "Rest in the Lord." Any doctor will prescribe rest in a case of fever; without it the patient is not likely to pull through. You must have rest; be still and see the salvation of the Lord, sit silent before God. Rubbing the eye is not likely to bring the mote out. Even if it does it will only inflame the optic more, and fretting is something like rubbing the eyes—it only increases the inflammation. Do not strive and struggle. 7. "Wait patiently for Him." The buds of His purposes must not be torn rudely open. They will unfold of themselves if you will let them. If you try to expedite matters you will spoil the whole business. God's time is the best time. 8. "Cease from anger and forsake wrath." Ah, I have heard of some people down with the fever who have been foolish enough to do things and to take things which are only calculated to add fuel to the fire. You cannot give up fretting until you begin to forgive. (T. Spurgeon.) *Fretting*:—1. Fretting in many cases supposes envy. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious," etc. Asaph did this, and he forcibly describes this painful and injurious process in the seventy-third psalm. It became too painful for him. He questioned the rectitude of Providence and the wisdom of God. Just then he was stopped; like Job, he said, "Once have I spoken, but I will proceed no further"; he fell on his face, confessing, "I am foolish," "I was envious!" and soon the scene changed from darkness to light, from complaining to communion, from fretting to rest in God. 2. While the fretting mood lasts, while we are troubled

because God withholds certain things from us which He gives so abundantly to others, expectation from God is excluded. Hope pines when the heart frets, and peace flutters outside that soul which care corrodes, and which complainings fill with discord. 8. Yet many excuses are often made for this line of conduct; and the more it is indulged in, the more it is justified. "Wherefore should a living man complain?" "If a sinner, he has no right to do so; if a saint, no reason;" for a sinner deserves hell at any moment, and a saint, though most unworthy, is on his way to a glorious heaven; and his very trials and deprivations are a means of preparing and training him for that better world. (*John Cox.*)

*Fretting*.—I. THE SIN. Fretfulness is a sin against—1. Ourselves. Destroys peace of mind; the mother of bitterness, harshness, fault-finding. 2. Others. Robs homes of their happiness. 8. God. John Wesley once said, "I dare no more fret than curse and swear." To have persons at my ears murmuring and fretting at everything, is like tearing the flesh from my bones. By the grace of God I am discontented at nothing. I see God sitting on His throne, and ruling all things." II. THE CAUSES. 1. Envy. 2. Covetousness. 3. Want of faith in God. I have read that one of Cromwell's friends was a fretting Christian, to whom everything went wrong. On a certain occasion, when unusually fretful, his sensible servant said, "Master, don't you think that God governed the world very well before you came into it?" "Yes; but why do you ask?" "Master, don't you think God will govern the world very well after you go out of it?" "Of course I do." "Well, then, can't you trust Him to govern it for the little time you are in it?" III. THE CURE. 1. Look on the bright side of things. 2. Look not merely at the present, but think of the future. 3. Have faith in God. Then you will welcome whatever comes, knowing that He can help, even by adverse circumstances. (*J. Scilley.*)

*The cure for care*.—1. "Fret not thyself." Do not get into a perilous heat about things. Keep cool! Even in a good cause fretfulness is not a wise helpmeet. Fretting only heats the bearings, it does not generate the steam. It is no help to a train for the axles to get hot; their heat is only a hindrance; the best contributions which the axles can make to the progress of the train is to keep cool. 2. How, then, is fretfulness to be cured? The psalmist brings in the heavenly to correct the earthly. "The Lord" is the refrain of almost every verse, as though it were only in the power of the heavenly that this dangerous fire could be subdued. (1) "Trust in the Lord." "Trust!" It is, perhaps, helpful to remember that the word which is here translated "trust" is elsewhere in the Old Testament translated "careless." "Be careless in the Lord!" Instead of carrying a load of care let care be absent! It is the carelessness of little children running about the house in the assurance of their father's providence and love. (2) "Delight thyself in the Lord." How beautiful the phrase! The literal significance is this, "Seek for delicacies in the Lord." Yes, and if we only set about with ardent purpose to discover the delicacies of the Lord's table, we should have no time and no inclination to fret. But this is just what the majority of us do not do. The delicacies of music are not found in the first half-dozen lessons; it is only in the later stages that we come to the exquisite. And so it is in art, and so it is in literature, and so it is with the "things of the Lord." "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Let us be ambitious for the excellent! God has not yet given to us of His best. He always keeps the best wine until the last. When we sit at the table of the Lord, tasting of His delicacies, fretfulness will be unable to breathe. (3) "Commit thy way unto the Lord." "Thy way!" What is that? Any pure purpose, any worthy ambition, any duty, anything we have got to do, any road we have got to tread, all our outgoings. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Let us commit our beginnings unto Him, before we have gone wrong, let us have His companionship from the very outset of the journey. If I am going out alone, fretfulness will encounter me before I have gone many steps in the way; if I go out in the company of Jesus I shall have the peace that passeth understanding, and the heat of my life will be the ardour of an intense devotion: (4) "Rest in the Lord." Having done all this, and doing it all, trusting in the Lord, delighting in the Lord, committing my way unto the Lord, let me now just "rest." Don't worry. Whatever happens, just refer it to the Lord! If it be anything injurious he will suppress it. If it be anything containing helpful ministry He will adapt it to our need. This is the cure for care. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Discontent*.—David was peculiarly qualified to admonish

the righteous as to their demeanour in relation to the ungodly. Never, perhaps, had man hotter conflicts with "evil-doers" and "workers of iniquity," and never were more signal triumphs gained over malignant hosts. We need words of soothing such as are breathed in the text. There is enough in society, both profane and professedly religious, to vex the spirit and trouble it with bitterest grief. I. **THAT THERE HAS EVER BEEN A GENERATION OF EVIL-DOERS.** All ages have been blackened with the shadow of evil-doers. Not a single century has been permitted to complete its revolution without being marred by their deadly presence! I ask you to mark the terrible energy implied in the designation "workers of iniquity." Reference is not made to men who make a pastime of iniquity, or who occasionally commit themselves to its service, but to those who toil at it as a business. As the merchantman is industrious in commerce, as the philosopher is assiduous in study, as the artist is indefatigable in elaboration, so those slaves of iniquity toil in their diabolic pursuits with an ardour which the most powerful remonstrance seldom abates! They are always ready to serve their master. II. **THAT THE SERVANTS OF GOD ARE NOT TO BE MOVED FROM THEIR COURSE BY THE GENERATION OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS.** "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers," etc. This language does not sanction carelessness as to the moral condition and destiny of the parties indicated. We need to mourn over it. But we are not to "fret" over evil-doers, though it be natural to do so, when we think of the terrible harm they do. You punish such men more severely by taking no notice of their malignity—they would rejoice in provoking retaliation. And these "evil-doers" are often prosperous in their way, whilst the good are often exposed to social hardships. Imagine not that secular prosperity is a pledge of Divine favour. III. **THAT A TERRIBLE DOOM AWAITS THE GENERATION OF EVIL-DOERS.** "For they shall soon be cut down," etc. Know ye of any such miserable spectacle as that of a human being "cut down"? As travellers have wandered over the ruins of classic temples, they have mourned their departed glory, but what are such ruins compared to the ruins of manhood? The heart that might have expanded with holiest emotion—wasted! The image of God an irrecoverable wreck! Imagination can paint no horrors so appalling. Though God uses not our chronometers in the measurement of time, yet the wicked themselves will have occasion to exclaim, "We are soon cut down!" You wrong your own souls in reasoning that "to-morrow shall be as this day and more abundant." The hour of your fullest joy is the hour of highest danger. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.**—*Fretful envy*:—I. A PAINFUL PASSION. There may be fretfulness where there is no envy. One may fret because of the tardy advancement of a cause dear to his heart, or because of the troubles of those in whom he is interested. There is a great deal of fretfulness that is almost constitutional, and therefore innocent and free from all "envy"; but there can be no envy where there is not fretfulness. What is envy? It is not merely a desire to possess that good which another has: that is emulation. To crave after that which gives power, and worth, and happiness is a laudable ambition. We are commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts." But "envy" is a malicious desire to possess what others have: it means their deprivation. Jealousy is a dread lest another shall possess what we wish for ourselves; envy is a dislike for another because he actually possesses the good desired; and because it is so impregnated with the malign it is always fretful. It is a grudging, growling passion; it is never at rest. II. IT IS A FOOLISH PASSION. IT IS DIRECTED AGAINST THE MOST UNENVIABLE OF CHARACTERS. "The workers of iniquity will be cut down like the grass." III. **ENVYING THE WICKED.** Shall the imperial eagle, whose undazzled eye drinks in the splendours of a cloudless sun, envy the worm that never rose an inch beyond its native dust? Shall the sun itself envy the flickering rush-light which the feeblest breeze can extinguish? Shall the heaving ocean, bearing on its bosom the richest merchandise, and reflecting from its deep blue eye the glories of the firmament, envy the little summer pool, which a passing cloud has poured into a foot-print? Sooner shall such envy be called into existence than the true child of God envy the "workers of iniquity." (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 3-8. Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.—*The Remedy for Hard Times*:—That is good, sound advice; no metaphysics in that; it is good common sense, even if it be three thousand years old. To-day is a time of a good deal of trouble in the world and all over the world. The troubles are political, commercial, social:

Everywhere is distress and misery, and chiefly upon the heads of men that least can bear it. Now, what has our religion to say to us under these circumstances? Much. Our text itself is a whole sermon, and I could add nothing to it. It is only for me to rub it in; for it is all there: "Trust in the Lord and do good; so . . . thou shalt be fed." Dwelling in the land was promised to those who were not unused to see whole populations carried off to Assyria or Babylon, or to Rome, according to the will of their conquerors. And in a land liable to famines as Palestine was, "vorily thou shalt be fed" was a very precious promise. And the New Testament echoes the Old, only carrying the thought higher, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God . . . and all . . . shall be added unto you." Two capital elements for consideration are given us in our text. I. TRUST. That is, have faith in God and in His care for you. And how wrong and foolish it is not to trust—for what father or mother ever loved their children as God loves us? But we trust God when things go well; when they do not, we only doubt. We do not live by faith, but by sight—more's the pity. But we are bidden trust, and—II. NOTE THE CONDITIONS are "do good." Trust inspires activity. Do not sit down in despair. You may be old, or verging toward it, and suddenly ruin comes. You say, "It is too late to build again," and you are filled with despair. Nay! While age brings with it less energy and hopefulness, it brings with it, also, experience. You may not go on in the same scale and way as before, but accept the altered position, make the most of it, and be of good courage and trust in God. There is no disgrace in your having ceased to be the possessor of large wealth. I think some of the noblest examples of womanhood that I have ever met anywhere have been those noble souls who, cast out into poverty, never appeared so wise, so noble, so reverend, as in their poverty. The light of a candle does not depend on the candlestick in which it burns. How lovely is a beautiful flower amid barren surroundings! When fortune lowers on you in the form of loss of means of living, circumscribe your wants. A man can live on wondrously little when he sets about it. And retrench at the right end—the end where luxuries come in, not that of your church gifts and charities. Many reverse this order, and pamper the body whilst they starve the soul. And do not give up moral activity in the church, the schools, or elsewhere. The real man comes out in times of trial and loss, when he has nothing but his manhood to depend upon. Try when troubles come to you to lighten the troubles of others. That is a golden remedy. Why should you complain or faint? Stand in your place and smile. Remember the eternal is yours. (*H. Ward Beecher.*) *Christian waiting*:—When you have nothing to do, and there is nothing to produce anxiety, it is easy to wait—for it is laziness; and all men are apt by nature to be lazy. But when there is anything that you have set your heart upon, it is very hard to wait, especially if the thing does not come as soon as you expect it to. Waiting is easy when it is sinful, and hard when it is a duty. You tell your child that this pine-tree out here in the sandy field is one day going to be as large as that great sonorous pine that sings to every wind in the wood. The child, incredulous, determines to watch and see whether the field pine really does grow and become as large as you say it will. So, the next morning, he goes out and takes a look at it, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a particle." At night he goes and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a bit." The next week he goes out, and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown any yet. Father said it would be as large as the pine-tree in the wood, but I do not see any likelihood of its becoming so." How long did it take that pine-tree in the wood to grow? Two hundred years. And do you suppose that God's kingdom is going to grow so that you can look at it and see that it has grown during any particular day? You cannot see it grow. It has been rising all the time, only you could not see it rise." When, therefore, God says, "Wait patiently," there is good reason in it. Now, apply these general truths. 1. To the men who laugh and jeer at the whole idea. They believe only in the selfishness of men, and that nothing good can be made out of them. But they are shallow men, and have no faith in the overruling providence of God. Because progress is so slow, and many professed Christians are traitors, and because God works in plans too vast for them to understand, they say, "It is folly to be talking about advancing the world. It is a poor, mean world, and we must make the best of it. Eat, drink, and be merry, O soul, for to-morrow you shall die." Yes, and perish! For God sits in judgment, and though the day of His coming seems to be long delayed, yet we, with strong assurance of faith,

resting on the pledged word of God, do look for the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2. Consider the folly of the discouragement which many feel because men are so imperfect, particularly those who go from a higher to a lower state of society. In the army the soldier learns to put up with things that are worse than those which he has been accustomed to. No soldier, when he is on a raid, thinks of having a parlour like his mother's, or sitting down in a kitchen before a fire when he is wet and cold, as he has often done in his father's house. He is contented if he can find a dry spot under a tree to lie down on. He makes up his mind that he must adapt himself to his circumstances. But many men go down into states of society very different from those to which they have been used, and because they are not men enough to do the work; because some men are clumsy and rude; because some are deceitful and dishonest; because men are just what they always have been, they are disgusted. They cannot wait for a better condition of things to come about through the processes of time and Divine power. To such men the word is, "Wait on the Lord; wait patiently; and by and by He shall give you the desire of your heart." 3. Consider the folly of envying wicked men when they are in power, and thinking that perhaps it is worth while to be as wicked as they are. This is the very thing that the psalmist says you must not do. "Fret not thyself in anywise to do evil, neither be thou envious against workers of iniquity." Their prosperity, says the psalm, in effect, is at the beginning, and not at the end. When men eat opium, they at first experience feelings of ecstasy, and they see visions, and dream dreams, and have a glorious hour or two; but when they have gone through these pleasant experiences, then what have they? Purgatory on earth! The after part is hideous to them in the proportion in which the fore part was agreeable. Pray on, then. Trust in God! Do not listen to any one who would make you discontented. I beseech of you, have faith, not in man, but in Him that loved you, that redeemed you with His precious blood, that sitteth on high, and that hath decreed that every yoke shall be broken, and that the oppressed shall go free. (*H. Ward Beecher.*) *Genuine piety the antidote to envy.*—I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENUINE PIETY. Here it is represented as operating—1. In a practical trust in the Lord. Not a passive, but an active state of mind. True philanthropy is piety in daily life. 2. In a personal delight in the Lord. This is infinitely more than to delight in our theology or our church. 3. In a settled reliance upon the Lord. This is a righteous, a necessary and a blessed work. 4. In a patient waiting upon the Lord. Be silent, and devoutly active. II. ITS BLESSEDNESS. 1. Settledness. Piety makes a man feel at home in the world wherever he is, everywhere he feels that he is in his father's house, and though legally he cannot claim a foot of land, morally he inherits all. 2. Sustenance. "Verily thou shalt be fed,"—fed not merely by bodily provisions, but by the higher provisions of soul—fed on truth. Nothing but truth can satisfy the cravings of the soul; nothing but truth can invigorate its powers. Man's spiritual nature grows in the atmosphere of genuine piety, but in all other climates it sickens and decays. 3. Realization. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart," and "He shall bring it to pass." What do these expressions mean but this: Thou shalt realize both the cravings of thine heart and the objects of thine hope, the ideals thou art struggling after shall become grand realities in thy life? 4. Vindication. "He shall bring forth thy righteousness," etc. Whilst good men are unknown to most, and misunderstood by many, they are misrepresented by not a few. But one day they shall be revealed to all, they shall blaze as orbs on the vision of mankind. (*Homilist.*) *A simple Gospel.*—This little, familiar text covers everything essential; it expresses the sum and substance of religion, and the great secret of right living. The God with whom we have to do is not an austere taskmaster, seeking to reap where He has not sown; He gives us grounds and reasons for trust before He solicits trust. In the world of nature and man, in the best thoughts of our own minds, in the best affections of our own hearts, in the best experiences of our own lives, in the witness of saintly and prophetic souls, in the life and work of Jesus Christ—God has revealed enough of His character and will to quicken and sustain trust in His righteousness and love, when clouds and darkness are round about Him, and mystery besets us behind and before, and we cannot walk any more by sight. I. WE MAY TRUST THE UNIVERSE. The confidence that the universe is essentially beneficent in all its operations, though it transcends actual knowledge, is yet based upon it. The more we study the relation of each part to the whole, and of the whole to

each, the more do we see that what we call evil is but good in the making. Everywhere we see wisdom and goodness—one purpose, one law, one power, one God, throughout the universe. At the root of all the seeming severity of nature, there is the everlasting faithfulness and love of God. II. **WE MAY TRUST LIFE.** We cannot hide from ourselves the dark side of human life, and we do not want a faith which does not fully recognize it; but when we study the tendency of things God becomes His own interpreter. God and good are perceived to be one, and our human world is seen to be moving through such processes as moral growth requires toward harmony with good. The week of creation is a long week. Wait! The end will explain and vindicate both the length and severity of the process. A careful study of the past affords sufficient justification for our largest expectations as to the coming years. The movement is ever towards good. The centuries grow juster, more merciful, more peaceful. III. **WE MAY TRUST GOD AS OUR FATHER AND SAVIOUR.** What Christ was finitely, God is infinitely. IV. **WE MAY TRUST GOD FOR ALL THE FUTURE.** Not alone for these brief and troubled mortal years is He our Father and Saviour, but for ever. His laws will never play false with us; His mercy will never fail us. In all and through all the Father is redeeming and educating His children. From His love no soul is ever outcast; to His love no soul is ever lost. V. **TRUST IN THE LORD AND DO GOOD.** 1. Trust in the Lord—there is our attitude toward the unknown and the unknowable. The unknown and the unknowable may be, and ought to be, trusted. With one of our modern seers we surely can say: "All I have seen bids me trust the Creator for all I have not seen." 2. Do good—there is our duty in the region of the known, in the realm of human relation and circumstance, in the realm of daily life. We cannot choose our life, but we can choose the way we shall live it. We can resolve and strive, whatever betides, to be good and to do good; ever to be loyal to the truest and best we know, and thus to compel the rapidly vanishing days to leave a blessing behind. (*John Hunter, D.D.*) *Trust in the Lord and do good:*—This psalm is a vivid expression of the belief that God is very plainly on the side of the righteous, and will make the wrong-doers understand it in a very decisive way. Surely a fundamental belief of man, without which religion is impossible. I. **THE ORDER OF THE THOUGHT IN OUR TEXT.** The trust comes before the doing good. Trust is the living root out of which all living goodness springs. But nothing can be more false than the idea that there is no goodness possible as the fruit of the natural action of the human powers. Augustine's principle, The virtues of the heathen are splendid vices, is false to the heart's core. There is natural goodness; man is so made that the freest and happiest play of his powers is in speaking truth and doing good. So far the heathen and deistical moralists are right. But man is made for a higher, a diviner goodness than the mere self-sustained play of his faculties can realize, a goodness whose life is the inspiration of God. Rob a plant of the air and sunlight, if there is some moisture about its roots, the sap within will produce some dim likeness of the flower, which under benigner conditions would flaunt its splendour and breathe its fragrance in the sun. So man, cut off from God, can produce some dim, dry image of the goodness which, when the life of God flows through it, will rise to godlike beauty and proportion. Good deeds will be fully and really such when their root is the grace and love of God. II. **BUT WHAT IS GOOD?** What are good deeds? "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" How many would be thankful for a list of good deeds with the counter-sign of Heaven. And God gives no catalogue of good deeds in His Word. The Churches are ready enough with their Do this and thou shalt live. But it is not the method of God. He goes at once to the root of the matter. Be good, if you would do good. Good, beautiful, Christ-like deeds are the affluence of a good, beautiful, Christ-like life. And there is but one way to be good. Begin at the beginning. Enter the training school of duty. Do the good thing which now lies nearest to your hand. Master your besetting sins. Look out daily for means to help and bless others. III. **THE PROMISE.** So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. The psalmist has no ideal meanings here: he means home and bread. And this would be the normal condition of things if the world were not so terribly jarred and jangled. Men and things would be in their right places. The wisest the teachers, the most prudent the managers, the ablest the rulers, the most liberal the almoners, the bravest the captains, the noblest the kings. But all is dislocated and confused. Yet through the whole there runs the law which finds expression in the text. "Trust in the Lord, and do good," and



your home among your brethren is sure. They know the well-doers, they love them, they make room for them. "Come in and abide with us, O thou blessed of the Lord." (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *On trust in God*:—I. **THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF TRUST IN GOD.** To trust in the Lord signifies, in general, to be free from anxiety concerning any events, present or future, under a firm persuasion that God careth for us, and will direct all events for our real happiness. Many persons are ingenious in tormenting themselves, and possess the unfortunate art of destroying their own happiness. If they have no real causes of affliction, they will imagine some. Their ill-boding foresight discerns, in what is future, a multitude of evils. But trust in God is directly opposed to this. He speaks not of rash, presumptuous confidence, but of that which rests on solid grounds; trust that is joined with practical piety. "And do good," says our text: and that employs all lawful means. As an illustration, see the conduct of Nehemiah.

II. **THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF SUCH TRUST.** 1. It is right. 2. It is blessed. 3. Demands an obedient life. (*S. Partridge, M.A.*) *Work and wages*:—Real as the causes of our anxieties may be, there is too much of what is called "Crossing the bridge, before we come to it!" The true secret of being useful, and free from needless fears, is to cultivate sunshine. The text is one of those comforting promises, on which the desponding would be wise to meditate. The conditions on which our Heavenly Father agrees to protect and provide for His people, are distinctly stated in this verse. I. **THAT WE TRUST IN HIM.** God's power to bless is not more boundless than His willingness to do so. Aye, He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly," etc. (Ephes. iii. 20). There must be confidence in the heart towards God; indeed, the beginning and the end of true religion is confidence. II. **DOING GOOD.** How much more we might do to make others happy than we ever try to do. One made happy each day, what a contribution to the general stock of joy that would be! And poor people can do this as well as rich. One is enabled to set an example of thankfulness and trust in God, which will be an encouragement to others who are careful and troubled about many things. Another exerts an influence for good, by showing a forgiving spirit. (*John W. Norton.*) **So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.—Temporal prosperity**:—Most thoughtful Christians will admit that an intelligent and believing Christianity tends to prosperity and success. The Christian nations, and the Christian communities among the nations, are the only thriving portions of the world. Where heathenism or infidelity prevail, there are poverty, squalor and vice. So invariably united are the two things that we cannot but see that the connection is that of cause and effect. But what about individuals? All the virtues necessary for success in life are inculcated by the Gospel, and not only inculcated, but imparted in that measure in which the man yields himself to Christ. Diligence, uprightness, sobriety, and such like, are, or ought to be, qualities of the Christian; and these are the virtues which lead to success. But we have other reasons. God is with them (Gen. xxxix. 2; 1 Sam. xviii. 14, 28; Deut. xx. 1; xxxi. 6-8; 1 Chron. v. 20; Jer. xxxix. 18; Ps. xxxvii. 40). President Garfield's mother was left a widow when he was a little boy, but she taught him this lesson in his very early years, and it became the principle upon which all his life-work was carried on. Whether as a boy he proposed to "run" a farm, or as a man to "run" the State, it was always in this fellowship with God that he prosecuted his tasks. And how marvellous the successes he achieved! Here, then, is plainly the one great secret of success.—"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." These promises do not certainly mean that God will make all His children rich, in the sense of being possessors of thousands. They mean only that each in his measure shall have enough. They promise the suitable and natural rewards of honest industry and well-doing. That is all we need, and all any wise man will desire. (*Evangelical Advocate.*) **Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.—Delight in God the origin and perfection of human pleasure**:—Pleasure, or the enjoyment of our heart's desire, being the chief spring of action in man, the due regulation of our pursuits of it must always be of great moment; and whoever addresseth us with an offer of this kind can scarce fail of engaging our attention. Consider, then, how all our pleasures point out to us, and are improved by, a delight in God. I. **THOSE OF THE SENSES.** How wrong are they who take their daily food without thankfulness or desire

for God's blessing. See our Lord's example of thanksgiving, and that of St. Paul. But because the example of Confucius may weigh more with some men than that of St. Paul, let me add what is observed of him: that he never ate anything but he first prostrated himself, and offered it to the supreme Lord of heaven. In like manner, Whether we eat or drink, let us do all to the glory of God. This will ennoble and improve our carnal gratifications, and exalt them into religious acts of gratitude and love. II. THOSE OF THE IMAGINATION. These are chiefly—1. Beauty. Think of the beauty of the world and who has poured it out upon the creation, Himself, infinitely more beautiful. When we see the sun shine forth in its lustre, and nature appearing in its most advantageous dress, how can we avoid turning our thoughts upwards toward that Being, whose handiwork that sun shows, every field, every flower, contains the most edifying rhetoric to excite in us the love of that Being, who hath clothed the lilies of the field with that elegant simplicity, which was superior to Solomon's pomp, when arrayed in all his glory. But the Christian man must think of Him who has enriched the world with such a profusion of good; has beautified it with such order and harmony, and has ennobled it with such astonishing magnificence. 2. Greatness. We love to behold that which is great, solemn and majestic, and this desire was stamped upon our nature for this very purpose, that we might take delight in contemplating Him, of whose greatness there is no end. Everybody knows we hate nothing more than confinement in a prospect: the soul loves to have a free and unlimited range. 3. Novelty. This excites pleasure. How comes it that we are generally in pursuit of something new; and yet, when we are possessed of it, and the object becomes familiar to us, we cease to care for it. Does not the unsatisfactoriness of things here below admonish us to fix our rest upon Him, who alone can satisfy, and even exceed our wishes? Whom the more we know, the more amiable we shall find Him, and find no end of His perfections. III. THOSE OF A MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL NATURE. No doubt, our highest affection, in the reason of the thing, is a tribute due to God considered as the highest good. Yet it must also be granted, that dry and abstracted reasons of love operate very faintly, unless we take into the account those affecting considerations of His being our Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and universal Benefactor. For this cause the Scripture tells us, we love God because He first loved us. IV. THOSE OF HOPE AND EXPECTATION. Now, present hope is present good; and a certain expectation of future blessings is in some measure a blessing in hand. Hope is the great cordial that must sweeten life, and make the nauseous draught go down. Recreations and pastimes, properly so called (for they serve for no other end but to pass away our time), may soothe the mind into a pleasing forgetfulness of its misery. But nothing can give us an exquisite relish and enjoyment of this life but the hopes of a better through the merits of Jesus Christ. (*J. Seed, M.A.*) *Sunshine in the heart*:—1. We have here, first, the life of a believer described as a delight in God; and thus we are certified of the great truth that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ask ye the worldlings what they think of religion,—and even when they practise its outward rites they snuff at it as a dull and dreary thing. They who love God with all their hearts, find that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower, as indivisible as truth and certainty. But there is another wonder in our text to worldly men, though it is a wonder well understood by Christians. 2. The text says, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." "Why," the worldly man says, "I thought religion was all self-denial; I never imagined that in loving God we could have our desires." Christian men have two selves; there is the old self, and therein they do deny the flesh with its affections and lusts; but there is a new self; the new man in Christ Jesus; and our religion does not consist in any self-denial of that. No, let it have the full swing of its desires; for all that it can long to enjoy, it may most safely obtain. So it is with the believer; his religion is a matter of delight; and that which he avoids is very little self-denial to him. His tastes are changed, his wishes are altered. He delights himself in his God, and joyously receives the desire of his heart. I. A PRECEPT WRITTEN UPON SPARKLING JEWELS. 1. What is this delight? A delightful word—I cannot use anything but its own self to describe it. If you look at it—it is flashing with light, it sparkles like a star, nay, like a bright constellation, radiant with sweet influences like the Pleiades. Delight! it is mirth without its froth. Delight! it is peace, yet it is more than that: it is peace celebrated with festivity, with all the

streamers hanging in the streets and all the music playing in the soul. Matthew Henry says, "desire is love in action, like a bird on the wing; delight is love in rest, like a bird on its nest." 2. Whence comes this delight? "Delight thyself in the Lord." (1) Delight thyself in Jehovah, in His very existence. This alone is enough to be a well-spring of joy for ever and ever to all true believers. (2) Delight also in His dominion. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." Jehovah is King! Come what may of it, He sits upon the throne and ruleth all things well. (3) Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in this sunlight of delight. That He is wise should make us glad who know our folly. That He is mighty should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting should always be a theme for our music, when we know that we are grass and wither as the green herb. That He is unchanging should always give us a song, since we change every hour and are never long the same. That He is full of grace, and that this grace in the covenant He has given to us, that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory—all this should tend to make us delight ourselves in Him. 3. When is this delight to be practised? My text does not say, "Delight thyself in the Lord occasionally, and now and then," but at all times. (1) It is hard to delight in God when everything goes well with us. "Oh," I hear you say, "I cannot understand that; that is the time when I do delight in God most." I am afraid it is the time when you delight in God least. Is it not likely that often you are delighting in His mercies rather than in Him? delighting in the creature rather than in the Creator? (2) Another time when it is hard to delight in God is when everything goes ill with us. Then we are apt to say with Jacob, "All these things are against us." 4. Why is this delighting in God so rare? Because there is so little on the one hand of genuine religion, and so little on the other of deep-toned religion where the little that there is is genuine.

**II. A PROMISE PRICELESS BEYOND RUBIES.** Those who delight in God are qualified to have the promise fulfilled. When a man's delight is in God, then His desires are of such a sort that God may be glorified in the granting of them, and the man himself profited by the receiving of them. Again, delighting in God qualifies the believer not only for desiring aright, but for spending aright: for some men, if they had their heart's desire, and it were a good desire, would nevertheless make a wrong use of it; but he that delights in God, whatever he gets, knows how to use it well. "Still," says one, "what are those desires which we are sure to receive?" Now, we must single out those who delight themselves in God, and I believe the range of their desires will be found in a very short compass. But if the Apostle Paul were here, who had nothing, who was often naked and poor and miserable, I am persuaded if he had his wish, he would say, "I have nothing to wish for, nothing upon earth, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." But if I must have a wish, I know what I would wish for. I would wish to be perfect, to be free from every sin, from all self, from all temptation, from all love of the world, from all care for everything or anything that is contrary to God's Word. "Well," says another, "if I might have my desire I would have all these things, but I would desire to be useful always." Ah, to be useful! Delight thyself in the Lord, thou shalt have thy desire. Perhaps not exactly as you would like to word it. You may not be useful in the sphere you aspire to, but you shall be useful as God would have you useful in His own way and in His own measure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*Delighting in the Lord*.—I. EVERY MAN DELIGHTS IN SOMETHING. . . . We possess affections, and they must have an object. II. EVERY MAN DESIRES THAT WHICH HE DELIGHTS IN. 1. The object of our delight is a loadstone which draws us toward itself. Wealth, honour, virtue. 2. In proportion to the intensity of our delight is the strength of our desire. 3. Our desire will control our thoughts, and aims, and actions. What the spring is to the watch, and the sun is to the solar system, desire is to the life. How important is it, then, that the objects we desire should be worthy of our aspirations. III. THE GODLY MAN DELIGHTS IN GOD, AND CONSEQUENTLY DOES NOT DESIRE ANYTHING WHICH IS OPPOSED TO HIS WILL. 1. But his desire is not only negative; it is strongly and intelligently positive. (1) He delights in God's Word, and studies it, that He may know God's will. (2) He delights in God's purposes, and is anxious to further them. (3) He delights in God's character, and lives to reflect it. 2. Such a desire is more than a desire. It is a determination—a determination to be as God is, and to do His will as it is done in heaven. IV. GOD IS ALWAYS READY TO GIVE

WHAT HE APPROVES, AND WHAT WE DELIGHT IN AND DESIRE. He cannot refuse anything which He has promised; He must and will give Himself to those who delight in and desire Him. V. HE WHO MAKES GOD HIS CHIEF GOOD, DESIRES GOD, AND RECEIVES GOD, HAS IN HIMSELF THE SECRET OF REAL SATISFACTION. What more can we have than God? Possessing Him, we possess all things. (*J. Baker Norton.*) *A sacred duty and a gracious reward*:—I. THE SACRED DUTY. "Delight thyself in the Lord." The sacred satisfaction here recommended is to be realized—1. By contemplating God in the glories of His nature, both in their unmingled and combined beauties. 2. By studying the discoveries of His infinite mind: the exhibition of these in redemption is the study and highest joy of heaven, and should be the source of rapturous joy to the Christian on earth. 3. By meditating the manifestations of His mercy, and tracing up to this source all our welfare, temporal and eternal. 4. By reflecting on His moral empire over the souls of men, and especially the hearts of His people. 5. By confiding in the wisdom and goodness of His providence. 6. By rejoicing in God's special relation to His people—"This God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death." II. THE GRACIOUS PROMISE. The desires of the righteous will always correspond with the objects of their delight. The Christian will desire—1. To comprehend more of the eternal mind: thus David, when he said, "None upon earth I desire beside Thee." 2. To feel a deeper impression of interest in His mercy, and this to realize is his highest felicity. 3. To enjoy more communion with God, and be filled with all His communicable fulness. 4. To live more to God in the world and be completely prepared for future glory. (*T. Yockney.*) *Delight in the Lord*:—It would be most calamitous for the world did God give to all men the desires of their hearts: that human wishes should thus become the measure of the Divine mercies. God's great laws could not be modified to our desires without deranging the harmony of the universe. Thus, for example, the ignorance of a traveller might desire the quenching of a volcano, or the arrest of some torrent of lava; but the fulfilment of such a desire might cause a terrible earthquake in some crowded city, and substitute the misery of thousands for the inconvenience and alarm of one individual. The stormy wind hushed here, might breed and then dispense the dire breath of pestilence on every side; and even the war and bloodshed which the strivings of philanthropic desire would righteously avert, may in God's grace bring untold blessings on successive generations. But mere ignorance of the mysterious and inscrutable reasons which guide the Divine government would be the least of the evils at work, for human desires are so deplorably selfish in their operation, that the moment of their gratification would be that which should give the signal for the outbreak of fearful passion and widespread misery. If it were allowed to us to choose for ourselves what we would have, there are perhaps few moments when the most sanguine of us would dare to make the choice. He must be a bold man, or a fool, who would dare to take his lot into his own government, and be the master of his own destiny. But is there no paradox in this, that though "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," "The prayer of the upright is His delight"? Is there no delusion in the command, "Ask, and ye shall receive"? or in the assurance of the apostle, "Ye have not, because ye ask not"? If we still hear these words with delight, it is because we have been forced back on the other mode of explaining this blessed fact; namely, that God hears the prayers which He has Himself prompted, that He hears certain prayers, and grants to certain men the desires of their hearts, because He has inspired those desires. He gives to certain longings of the heart the fullest satisfaction, because He has by His Spirit suggested those longings. The question now arises, How are we to know whether the desires of our hearts are divinely implanted, and are such as God will hear? The child may cry for a knife, for fire, for food, which it would be cruel to grant. It is better that the child should be unhappy, vexed, angry because its request is denied, than that the gift should be bestowed and instantly abused. When Paul was pierced by the "thorn in the flesh," he thrice besought the Lord to remove it from him; but God had a greater blessing in store, and gave him instead of such deliverance, the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Does the Holy Scripture, and will the Holy Spirit, help us to solve this great problem, or guide us to the class of desires which will foreshadow the Divine purpose? Have we any magnet that will point out to us the eternal pole of the will of God? The text gives us abundant help here; "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart;" or, as it might be para-

phrased, "Delight in the Lord, and then thou mayest trust thy desires; they will be the forerunner of blessings, the beginning of their own realization." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Delight thyself in the Lord, and thou wilt desire strongly only what is in harmony with His will, and best for thyself. All thy wishes will be brought into subjection to His will, and thou wilt crave only those things which He is ready and anxious to bestow upon thee. (*H. Reynolds, D.D.*) *Delighting in God*.—I. THE DUTY REQUIRED. 1. What is necessary in order to the performance of it? (1) The first thing required is evidently an acquaintance with God. We must, to some extent, be acquainted with His character, His works, and His disposition and intentions towards ourselves. (2) We must be possessed of conformity to Him, and have some degree of likeness to Him ourselves; otherwise, we may know the truth about Him, but it will afford us no delight whatever. From Ephes. iv. 22-24, and Col. iii. 9, 10, we learn that the likeness must consist in two things—holiness and knowledge. Holiness includes two things—justice and goodness. We cannot conceive of a holy being in the character of a malignant one, or suppose any, with a deep love for what is right, to be filled with malevolence. We must have a love for justice, then, before we can delight ourselves in God. And the only way by which we can come to have it, is by faith in Christ. Then, in conjunction with this, our character itself is changed; we have no longer the love of sin, but a true regard for everything in which there is any "virtue or any praise"—and therefore a supreme admiration of Him who is the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." If we would be able to delight ourselves in God, we must likewise be conformed to Him in His knowledge. God knows what is the chief end of man's life, what is right and what is wrong. The Christian, by believing God's revelation, knows this too, and is conformed to Jehovah in respect to knowledge. 2. The way in which we should show our delight in Him. (1) By meditating upon Him. (2) By taking an interest in creation and created things as His work; and by observing the course of events as His providence working out the great end of His own glory and blessing His creatures. (3) By reading His Word; attending on His ordinances, and observing His sacraments. II. THE BLESSING PROMISED TO THOSE WHO PERFORM THE DUTY. This would be a dangerous promise to make to those who were to retain their corrupt heart; for were the wicked man to obtain "the desires of his heart," he would destroy at one stroke all whom he thought his enemies, annihilate hell, make heaven a place of sensual enjoyment, and dethrone the Lord of all Himself. Happily, however, all who "delight themselves in God" will have very different wishes from these. 1. Those who delight in Him will desire to have a greater acquaintance with Him; and they will not fail to be gratified. 2. If we delight in God we shall desire a greater love to Him, and shall obtain it. 3. If we delight in God we shall wish to have closer communion with Him, and shall obtain our desire while we remain on earth. 4. Those who delight themselves in God will desire and obtain a greater degree of likeness to God; and what a noble thing it must be to resemble in the slightest extent the Lord of all! Their likeness will perhaps be best seen in regard to "God manifest in the flesh." "Because he lives, we shall live also." We shall partake of His glory, resemble His character, and sit down upon His throne. (*W. Dickson.*) *Rest to the aching heart*.—When we look out upon the world, what an amount of suffering do we see! Desires which never meet with accomplishment, hopes entertained which are blighted. I have seen little creepers in my garden throwing out tendrils in search of a support, and finding none; at last the life of the poor plants seems exhausted by their efforts, they give up straining, and lie numb on their bed of earth and die away. O what clusters of beautiful bells would they have put forth, what a burden of fruit would they have borne, had they grasped their support, and climbed and lifted themselves into the air! Now they produce but a few cankered blossoms, and ripen no seed. Is not this the picture of many a human life? Is there a human heart that has not suffered? Human hearts are human hearts, and they must have their struggles and sufferings. We ignore them too much, we have not sympathy enough for them. How varied, also, are the sorrows of heart and mind. 1. I suppose there are many now past the middle age to whom the fact that the chapter of life is closing, the romance of life is concluding, causes many an ache. The primroses and bluebells of youth have died away, and now the leaves are falling round them. What faculties there were in the young mind never developed, because circumstances were adverse, how its joyousness was blighted

by incessant toil, how its energies were marred by some fatal mistake, or some irretrievable choice. Without resurrection of the dead, new heavens and a new earth, God and Christ, and eternity, we are of all men most miserable; there is nothing more hopeless than a declining life, nothing more calculated to fill with despair than the ebbing away of life's forces. But the joyousness of the new birth! childhood's innocence and mirth restored! faculties of receiving pleasure from sight and sound refreshed and enlarged! To this we must stretch, for this pray, and in this yearning and in thus praying we shall find comfort as our day declines. 2. Passionate love is felt by some hearts which will, which can never be known by the object of affection, or which, if known, is never returned. Is there a more painful wound? Yet is there no balm in Gilead? Has He, the healer of every human misery, no touch for the heart stricken with such an arrow? Surely yes. The bruised and bleeding soul will find its only solace in prayer, in prayer for the object of affection. It may be that there is a separation on earth, but there will be a reunion in heaven. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*)

*A sure method of obtaining our desires*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S ADVICE. 1. Delight thyself in the favour, approbation, friendship of the Lord. (1) Prize it. (2) Seek it. (3) Keep it. 2. Delight thyself in the service of the Lord. (1) It is excellent in itself. (2) It brings an excellent reward. 3. Delight thyself in the doctrine of the Lord. II. THE PSALMIST'S ENCOURAGEMENT. He must be understood to speak of—1. Innocent desires. 2. Spiritual desires. 3. Scriptural desires. 4. Earnest desires. 5. Expressed desires (Luke xi. 9; Phil. iv. 6). (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

*Delight in the Lord*.—Boundless resources, it is manifest, could not be safely at the disposal of less than boundless wisdom. Only on one condition would it be a certain benefit to be assured of getting everything that we desired—the condition, namely, that we should always desire that which is best. Well, that and nothing else is what God undertakes to do for us if only we will let Him. The great aim and object of all His dealings with us—especially of the mission of His Son and the mission of the Holy Ghost—is twofold: first, to get us to desire what is best and then to give it to us. There is one desire that ought to be central in every human heart—the desire for God, the love of our Father in heaven. In a large family there may be great diversities of taste and disposition, without their interfering at all with the love which each of the children bears to the father and mother; and it certainly would be no excuse for an ungrateful son when charged with his unfilial spirit if he were to say, "Our family are not all alike; we are quite different from one another in our tastes. One is fond of reading, another of music, another of painting, and a fourth of athletic sports; and if there be some of my sisters who are fond of their father and mother, I have no objection. Every one to his taste, but I do not care anything about them." Would any one allow that to be a reasonable and proper way of getting rid of the filial obligation to love and honour our father and mother? Certainly not. Why, then, should it ever be thought a sufficient excuse for not caring for the Father of our spirits? God has created us with a great variety of lower desires, but there is one desire which ought to be in every human heart as its dominant ruling desire—the desire for God. If any one has not that desire as a controlling desire his whole nature is in chaos, and unless that is rectified his end must be destruction. But is it indeed true that when this condition is fulfilled the other always follows? Who is there, even among the best people, who gets everything that his heart is set on? But here we must, in all fairness, bear in mind that it is not said, either here or anywhere else, that every desire of the child of God shall be immediately gratified. On the contrary, it is very clearly intimated that faith and patience will be needed (vers. 5, 7). This, of course, modifies the promise, but it does not diminish its value. Rather it increases its value. We may be sure that if God keeps us waiting it is for some very good purpose. We may be sure that the blessing, when it comes, will be richer than if it had come at the same moment that we first desired it. Making all allowance for this, let us now look at the immense advantages which those enjoy who delight themselves in the Lord. 1. In the first place, their chief desire is one which can be always gratified. Now, is not that a great thing? But not only is the chief desire of those who delight themselves in the Lord one that can be always gratified; but all the desires that spring up around it are of the same nature. When a man delights himself in the Lord the merely selfish desires die out of his heart, and far better things take their place. Oh, do not think that the heart is left empty when the old desires go out. It is stocked with far better

and nobler ones. Then the will becomes parallel to God's, and hence it does not need to be checked or thwarted as before. 2. Then, again, whatever is denied now is denied only for a time. We have already acknowledged that there are some of our desires that we must be content to wait for, but the time is certainly coming when they shall all be fulfilled. If only we give our hearts unreservedly to the Lord, we may rest assured that He will not allow any desire to remain in them which He does not intend to gratify to the full. (*J. Monro Gibson, D.D.*)

*The secret of tranquillity:*—"I have been young, and now am old," says the writer of this psalm. Its whole tone speaks the ripened wisdom and autumnal calm of age. The dim eyes have seen and survived so much, that it seems scarcely worth while to be agitated by what ceases so soon. Life with its changes has not soured but quieted him. The secret of tranquillity is seen—I. **IN FREEDOM FROM EAGER, EARTHLY DESIRES.** "Delight thyself in the Lord," etc. The great reason why life is troubled lies not without but within. It is not our changing circumstances, but our unregulated desires, that rob us of peace. We are feverish, not because of the external temperature, but because of the state of our own blood. One desire unfulfilled is enough to banish tranquillity; but how can it survive a dozen dragging different ways? And, still further, they destroy tranquillity by putting us at the mercy of externals. Do not venture the rich freightage of your happiness in crazy vessels. If your life twines round any prop but God your strength, be sure that, some time or other, the stay to which its tendrils cling will be plucked up, and the poor vine will be lacerated, its clusters crushed, and its sap bleeding out of it. "Delight thyself in the Lord"—that is the cure for all the feverish unrest of desires. Rest must come from delighting in God, for it is no longer distracted by many desires, but has come under the one master-attraction. Such a soul is still as the great river above the falls, when all the side currents and dimpling eddies and backwaters are effaced by the attraction that draws every drop in the one direction. Let the current of your being set towards God, then your life will be filled and calmed by one master-passion which unites and stills the soul. And for another reason there will be peace: because in such a case desire and fruition go together. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Only do not vulgarize that great promise by making it out to mean that, if we will be good, He will give us the earthly blessings which we wish. Sometimes we shall get them, and sometimes not; but the real desire of the man who delights in God will be God Himself, and this desire is ever fulfilled. And again, desire after God brings peace by putting all other wishes in their right place. The counsel in the text does not enjoin the extinction, but the subordination of all other desires. The presence of the king awes the crowd into silence.

II. **IN FREEDOM FROM THE PERPLEXITY OF CHOOSING OUR PATH.** This is a word for all life, not only for its great occasions. Twice or thrice, perhaps, in a man's life his road leads him up to a high dividing point, a watershed, as it were, whence the rain runs from, the one side of the ridge to the Pacific, and from the other to the Atlantic. His whole future may depend on his bearing the least bit to the right hand or to the left, and all the slopes below, on either side, are wreathed in mist. Powerless as he is to see before him, he has yet to choose, and his choice determines the rest of his days. Certainly he needs some guidance then. But he needs it not less in the small decisions of every hour. Our histories are made up of a series of trifles, in each of which a separate act of will and choice is involved. Depend upon it that, if we have not learned the habit of committing the daily-recurring monotonous steps to Him, we shall find it very, very hard to seek His help when we come to a fork in the road. So this is a command for all life, not only for its turning-points. Thus, these two keys—joy in God, and trust in His guidance—open for us the double doors of the secret place of the Most High; where all the roar of the busy world dies upon the ear, and the still small voice of the present God deepens the silence, and hushes the heart. Be quiet, and you will hear Him speak—delight in Him, that you may be quiet.

III. The secret of tranquillity is found, thirdly, **IN FREEDOM FROM THE ANXIETY OF AN UNKNOWN FUTURE.** "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Such an addition to these previous counsels is needful, if all the sources of our disquiet are to be dealt with. The future is dim, after all our straining to see into its depths. Confidence that the future will but evolve God's purposes, and that all these are enlisted on our side, will give peace and power. But remember that the peaceful confidence of this final counsel is legitimate only when we have obeyed the other two. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Delighting in the Lord* (with

ver. 7).—What desires of the heart are there which we may be quite sure that God will grant if we rest on Him and wait patiently for Him? I think the first of the two verses which I took for my text enables us to see the right answer. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire." Delighting in the Lord opens out an entirely new field for the desires of the heart. In plain and brief words, it is to desire to be and to do instead of desiring to have. Delighting in the Lord does not mean the ceasing to be human, ceasing to have wants and natural lawful desires for success and happiness, but it means that all these native and lawful wishes become subordinate to a higher desire still, so that for its sake we are willing to forego all the rest. We may be hungry and thirsty, yet our meat and drink will be to do the will of Him who sent us here and to finish His work. We may be poor and needy, but we shall esteem the words of God and obedience to His law better than thousands of gold and silver. We may be hungering for a love which is out of our reach, or sorrowing for the loss of a love that can never be ours and yet find in God a love passing the love of women. We may be toiling all day, and our very sleep may be broken by festering care and by even a holy anxiety to bring our work to completion, and yet shall find something better and higher than success in the knowledge that we are working for God and doing our best and earning His approval. If the greatest and supreme of all our delights is in being and in doing what God wills, nothing can frustrate His purpose to give us our heart's desire. Extinction of desire is impossible. To gain happiness by its means, one must simply change its direction, fixing it upon that which cannot be denied, and which when obtained cannot perish or fade. Thus it is we learn, in theory at least, that to secure happiness we must seek it in those paths only which our Creator has ordained for us; in longing after Himself who is eternal, unchangeable and infinite in attractiveness and loveliness, in longing to be all that He desires us to be and to do all that He bids us do. At least, to make these wishes uppermost and foremost beyond all other wishes—not to extinguish those or to mortify them wantonly—but to prevent them effectually from ever reaching the highest place in our hearts or supplanting the supreme desire to love and to please our God. (*C. Voysey, B.A.*) *Delight in God*.—Delight is a general idea, and all the various powers of the mind, and feelings of the heart minister to its production in different ways. Think of any of these, and say whether you do not find that it can meet nowhere with such rich and abundant supplies, as in the attributes of the Almighty. 1. One of those powers of the mind, in which man finds a very copious spring of delight, is the capacity of looking onward into futurity, and indulging in the fair visions of hope. Anticipation has been called the better-half of pleasure. If this be so, where could you look for such full and safe indulgence of this faculty, as in the contemplation of what the Giver of all good can and will do for those who look to Him as the source of their happiness (Ps. xxxvi. 8). 2. The memory is another faculty of the mind, which is highly conducive to its happiness. Many sources of delight are richer even in the recollection than in the immediate enjoyment; as the tints that appear in the western heaven are frequently most beautiful, some time after the bright orb, from which they are reflected, has itself vanished from our sight. Now, if we were more addicted to marking the ways of God, and His gracious dealings towards us, we should find this to be eminently the case in respect to them. It is in the calmer moments of recollection, in the retrospect which the soul, at all habituated to self-examination, takes of the mercies for which it is indebted to God, that the instances of His loving-kindness and fatherly care break out upon it in their full proportions, and almost melt and overcome it with sensations of gratitude and delight. In this respect, how little will any earthly joy bear a comparison with delight in the Lord! 3. Another distinguished source of human delight is the growth of the intellectual powers, the acquisition of knowledge. And what knowledge can bear a comparison with the knowledge of the Lord? If it be a delightful sensation to perceive that our mind has made some progress; that it knows that of which it was formerly ignorant; that it can form clear and distinct ideas about that which seemed to it formerly clouded and obscure; how must that delight be increased when the object of our newly acquired information is the highest on which the mind of man can dwell; and when the things which we learn are things which accompany salvation! 4. But the excitement of the affections is a much commoner source of delight than the acquisition of knowledge, and here we may holdly challenge any one to find an object that has so many and so powerful



claims on the heart of man, as belong to God. If the most astonishing mercy, the most inestimable benefits, the tenderest care, the largest and most liberal bounty, are calculated to excite feelings of complacency and attachment in the human breast, then may we well delight in God, as an object of affection, and feel our hearts expand with indescribable pleasure, and with the most solid satisfaction, in meditating on His character and attributes. (*J. Marriott, M.A.*)

*Delight in prayer*.—Without cheerful prayer we cannot have gracious answers. Note—I. WHAT THIS DELIGHT IS. Delight properly is an affection of the mind that springs from the possession of a good which hath been ardently desired. Delight properly is a silencing of desire, and the banquet of the soul on the presence of its desired object. But there is a delight of a lower stamp. 1. In desires. There is a delight in desire as well as in fruition. 2. In hopes (Rom. v. 2). 3. In contemplation. The consideration and serious thoughts of heaven do affect a gracious heart and fill it with pleasure, though itself be as if in a wilderness. As the union with the object is nearer, so the delight is stronger. Now, this delight the soul hath in duty is not a delight of fruition, but of desire, hope or contemplation. Now, delight is active or passive, as Isa. lxiv. 5. When we delightfully clasp the throne of grace God doth often cast His arms about our necks. II. WHENCE THIS DELIGHT SPRINGS. 1. From the Spirit of God. Not a spark of fire upon our own hearth that is able to kindle this spiritual delight. It is the Holy Ghost (Ps. cxxxviii. 3; Isa. lvi. 7). 2. From grace. Dead men cannot perform a duty (Ps. cxv. 17). 3. From a good conscience (Prov. xv. 15). He that hath a good conscience must needs be cheerful in his religious and civil duties. Guilt will come trembling, and with a sad countenance, into the presence of God's majesty. A guilty child cannot with cheerfulness come into a displeased father's presence. 4. From a holy familiarity with God. Hence there is delight in one another's company. 5. From hopes of speeding (Rom. xii. 12). 6. From a sense of former mercies and acceptance. These quicken our desire for and expectation of more (Ps. cxvi. 2). III. THE REASONS OF THIS DOCTRINE, that without cheerful seeking, we cannot have a gracious answer. For—1. A flat and dumpyish temper is not for His honour; and prayers in such temper do not reach Him, and they speak an unwillingness that God should hear us. 2. And without delight we are not fit to receive a mercy. Delight in a mercy wanted makes room for desire, and large desires make room for mercy. If no delight in begging, there will be no delight in enjoying; if there be no cheerfulness to quicken our prayers when we need a blessing, there will be little joy to quicken our praise when we receive a blessing. Had not Zaccheus had a great joy at the news of Christ's coming by his door, he had not so readily entertained and welcomed Him. IV. USES. 1. Of information. (1) There is a great pleasure in the ways of God, if rightly understood. Prayer, which is a duty wherein we express our wants, is delightful. There is more sweetness in a Christian's asking, than in a wicked man's enjoying, blessings. (2) What delight will there be in heaven! If there be such sweetness in desire, what will there be in full fruition! There is joy in seeking; what is there then in finding! Duty hath its sweets, its thousands, but glory its ten thousands. (3) The miserable condition of those that can delight in anything but prayer. It is an aggravation of our enmity to God, when we can sin cheerfully and pray dully, when duty is more loathsome than iniquity. 2. Of examination. We pray, but how are our hearts? (*S. Charnock.*)

*Delight in God*.—I. IN WHAT WAY ARE WE TO COMPLY WITH THE CONDITION—"Delight thyself in the Lord"? What does this mean? The idea of delighting in God is just one of those great, inclusive religious ideas, that by their very vastness almost disable remark. When a man has attained to this, that he supremely delights in the blessed God, his religious life is well nigh perfect. To delight in God is the possibility only of a spiritual, a religious being. The distinction is clearly made between God and His gifts. We might delight in any of the things that God has given, in any of the material and intellectual blessings of life, the manifold provisions and gifts of God's providence, but this would not be to delight in God Himself. We have to do here with the highest religious elements of our nature, and with the highest exercise of them. The emotion expressed is both a high and a rare one. Even among pious men there is, I fear, very little genuine joy in God. They feel there ought to be, and they pray for it; but their actual feeling is rarely that of passion; it is calm, measured, almost cold. Sometimes they can say, "As the hart panteth after," etc.; but not often. And there may be much satisfaction in prayer, and yet no delight. For prayer may be a

relief, a vent to feeling long suppressed; or it may be a cry of urgent necessity, or disguised self-flattery, like that of the Pharisee. But all this is not delight.

II. TRUE DELIGHT IN GOD WILL HAVE RESPECT, FIRST, TO WHAT GOD IS, AS A SPIRITUAL BEING OF SUPREME EXCELLENCY AND GLORY—the Author of all other beings and of all things. We are capable of so contemplating God. The Bible is full of this feeling: how eloquent, how rapturous are its recognitions of God. How David delighted in this. And so was it in the early Church. See the *Te Deum*, etc. 1. Now, I do not ask whether you delight in other things rather than in God; in your business or books, in science or social festivities, in amusements or sensual gratifications. In such a case, your delight is clearly irreligious. But I ask you to distinguish between your religious delights—between the religious feelings that have your own soul for their object, and the religious feelings that have God for their object. The one is simply religious selfishness; the other is religious worship and sacrifice. I need not add, that our supreme delight in God is when God is manifested in Jesus Christ; when, in the Incarnate, redeeming Son, He expresses all the wondrous riches of His great wisdom and love—when we see the Eternal light in the Eternal love. No man can delight in God until he attains the perfect love which casteth out fear. 2. A religious soul will also delight in what God does; in all the movements of His providence; in all the arrangements of His grace. Our religious life is largely affected by the way in which we look at God's doings—by the feelings which we cherish towards them. It is easy, of course, to delight in God's doings when His providential ways are pleasant to us and His gifts affluent. And this is really the chief experience of most lives. Privation and sorrow are more exceptional than we think. A great sorrow fills a large space in our thoughts, but a small one in our lives. We think more of the one black cloud than of the blue sky across which it is driven. We cannot, of course, delight in pain, but we may delight in God who inflicts pain, delight in Him although He inflicts pain; have such strong assurance of His wise love, that we cling to Him in the steadfast love of our troubled hearts.

III. IN WHAT SENSE WILL THE LORD GIVE THE MAN WHO DELIGHTS IN HIM THE DESIRES OF HIS HEART? It is a daring phrase, for even good men may desire hurtful and wrong things. Our desires are no safe law or measure of blessing. But if God cannot change at our caprice, may not our caprice itself change? And is not this the way in which this daring assurance is really fulfilled? Delight thyself in the Lord, and then thy desires will be right: thou wilt be happy in the perfect gratification of thy instructed and pious desires. "The prayer of the upright is His delight." Our first and our great solicitude, then, should be about the delights of our souls. What are our supreme delights? God's gifts or Himself? Our wealth, pleasures, home, or our spiritual privileges? Our delights will always create and shape our desires. If we desire God and holiness, and the salvation of men, no desires of ours for these things can be so deep as God desires. A nurture, a culture, an urgency of the spiritual soul is possible to us. Delight in God will grow by that which it feeds upon—its satisfaction enlarges its desires. And when we do really delight in God, holiness will be easy and natural as common life; duty will be turned into a joy, and self-sacrifice will rejoice in love. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Our heart's desire*:—In the course of conversation with a brother minister, I was told that a layman had put to him this question: "What is the meaning of the seemingly unqualified promise, 'He shall give thee the desires of thine heart'? Surely it is somewhat difficult to believe that promise as it stands." Undoubtedly, as our text stands, or I should say, on the face of it, it is obviously untrue. Most people would be prepared to say that they do not get, or very seldom get, the desires of their heart. The woman who has to battle with odds against a world with which she is very little fitted to deal. If you were to ask her whether she has had, or is likely to have, her heart's desire, you would receive a flat denial. Her heart's desire is that these dear ones, against whom she will not bear a word spoken, should be placed above the reach of the world's criticism, or censure, or persecution. What do you think, you older men, as you look back upon life, concerning God's dealings with you? When you were young you had great hopes for your own future; unlike a woman's, they were very largely desires of personal ambition. But very few of us ever come to the experience after which we strive. The successful man—successful as the world would call it, or, to be nearer the mark, as he himself would acknowledge it—is in a very small minority in this place. If you look back, you can see how you have taken the wrong turn; where you uttered a word which did you disservice—you had better have been silent—or

where you were silent when it had been better you had seized the chance and risen. Inferior men have passed you on the road, less scrupulous men have climbed to positions of honour and respect which you do not occupy to-day. Then there are other experiences which a preacher must touch with a still more delicate hand. Here is a man of whom his neighbours say that he has never looked up since his boy died. All his heart's desire was centred upon that lad. These are such common, everyday experiences that one hardly needs to indicate them in your presence. How do they look alongside of the psalmist's prayer: "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"? I will tell you how to approach the text now. Remember, he who penned this statement was a living, breathing man. For he knew life then as really and truly in its heights and depths as you and I know it now. So when he wrote down: "He shall give thee thine heart's desire," he must have meant something in all seriousness, and I think the context will help us to understand what it is. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." He is writing for himself; he had been fretting against the evil-doers, and he had been declaiming against the workers of iniquity. Listen further. "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Understand, this man is on the very borderland of a temptation: he is going to repay evil with evil; he is going to fight the world with the world's weapons, and his utterance is one of warning directed to his own conscience. But at his best he rises to a new height: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. . . . Delight thyself in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." This man evidently has not been receiving the desires of his heart, he has been seeing the less worthy prosper, and it is out of his own experience that he writes. He has seen something; it is that the pure in heart, the noble in character, are on the side of God, and the best that they have is drawn from the heart of God: therefore God will give them their deepest desire if only because it is also His own. For now we have struck the very point. The heart's desire is the deepest desire, and it may be, and often is, that a man's heart's desire is hidden from himself, and known only to God. Here is a man who wants something intensely. What do you want it for? It may be a good desire, as well as a bad one. Most people assume at once that when a man is in quest of money he wants it that he may do some mischief with it or indulge himself by its possession. This man may want money that he may liberate his own soul from its present prison-house, that he may enlarge his borders, be good, do good, get good. Or here again is a man who has a holy purpose, in which himself is hardly concerned; it is for another's good he wants the power that money can give. So now, if you pray for £500 a year—I will put the request as simply as I can state it—if you are praying in any such terms, whether God answers the prayer or whether He denies it, your heart's desire is not for the thing called money, it is for the moral and spiritual result the money can bring. Here is a man asking for fame. He may be utterly wrong in the praying of this prayer, most likely he is: "Ambition, that last infirmity of noble minds." Well, what does he want? He thinks he wants fame. If he gets it, he will say, like Merlin—

"Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,  
But when my name was lifted up, the storm  
Broke on the mountain and I cared not for it.  
Right well know I that fame is half disface,  
Yet needs must work my work."

Ofttimes the thing you think you want is not the thing you really want. The man wants what he supposes fame brings, but which fame never brings. There is a satisfaction that goodness and goodness only can give, and it is the satisfaction that comes from achieving his best of which he is really in search. You may not get either the money or the fame, but you shall get the thing you suppose they will bring. Yet a man may put his prayer into such a form that he supposes himself to be seeking the good when he is seeking nothing of the kind. The heart's desire is that oftentimes which lies beneath desire; it is the best of which a man is capable. His prayer is a symbol, the true reality is the heart's desire. There are not a few here who have not understood up to the present that the heart's desire may best be gratified when the surface petition is denied. God turned you

back, it may be, long, long ago, when you thought you saw your road plain before you, because He understood better than you did your heart's desire. God shut a door in your face; if you had gone through that door, I do not say it would have been to material ruin, but you would not have been the man you are to-day, the man of serious purpose and high character. God denied you your brief worldly success, and you are a bigger and better man because it never came; and God gave you what you never anticipated when you rebelled against the way that He chose for you long ago, but you may yet live to praise Him with a full heart fervently because He understood so clearly your heart's desire. Now, one thing more, my brethren, hard as it may seem to say it. Even now, when you have come to the valley of humiliation and to the shadow of death, God is giving you a great opportunity. He believes in your nature too much to lead you always through green pastures and by still waters, so he has given you the chance of being a hero, and some day you will say, "Right was the pathway leading to this." How well God understands the heart's desire! Now one or two observations upon the principle. The first is this. Every great capacity assumes an equally great satisfaction. Sir J. Burdon-Sanderson, of Oxford, once said in a lecture before a scientific assembly, that if in any nature you found a great capacity, a vessel to be filled, there was that wherewith to satisfy, that wherewith it should be filled. It is so undoubtedly in spiritual things. He shall satisfy that which He Himself has fashioned. Many of you, however, have ceased to affirm consistently and by your life that which you have been trying to gain impulsively or spasmodically. The other day I was watching at the seaside a boy fishing by the side of a grown man. The man knew what he was about, the boy was only beginning. The little fellow did not catch anything, he did not allow the fly to stay down long enough; every few minutes up came the hook, that he might see whether anything had taken place in the deep waters. His elder companion sat stolidly there, and fished perseveringly on. He gained something, where the little fellow did not. So many of our lives are so inconsistently adjusted that we deny with our act what we affirm with our lips. We pray to God to do what we do not live ourselves; we seem as if we are always pulling up and beginning again. Yet a prayer, to be consistent and fruitful, should be the utterance of a man's whole life and character; we stand at our highest, or ought to stand at our highest, when we pray. A great capacity presumes a great satisfaction—give it a chance in your own life. For it is not merely what a man's lips utter, but what his whole life affirms, that is his real prayer. Secondly, there are some seemingly impossible things which I would bring within the range of answered prayer. There are not a few here, it may be, who are accustomed to pray half-despairingly for the sake of those whom God has given them to love and care for. How impossible it seems that you should prevail over an evil will, if it be the will of another, in your intercessory appeals to the heart of God. And then is not God Himself helpless before the citadel of the human will? I do not care to go into metaphysics on that subject, but I would have you remember that you are encouraged in the highest of all prayers, Christ-like intercession, to act as though there were no barrier before the will of God. Where does your personality leave off and another's personality begin? It is in a sense true this morning that I, who address you am you, and you who sit answering silently back are me; we are one for the time being, or there would be no communion. Believe then that, as we are linked together by invisible bonds, love could draw some tighter still. I would never believe, I would never care to assert at any rate, that there is any point where the will of man can exalt itself determinedly and lastingly against the will of God. May those who feel that they have to carry a heart's desire not for their own sake but for another as the great Heart Eternal, take courage from that thought; pray as though there were no barrier which God cannot overcome, and through which the Christ, the Redeemer, cannot pass. Lastly, there is only one thing more I would leave with you. Though the psalmist is speaking here of the righteous man, the principle to an extent holds good of the prayer of an evil man. All evil desire has its appropriate recoil. No man whose life is a curse ever manages to blight the career of those against whom he has sinned as he blights himself. God shall give you some of your hideous desires, and they will come back to you in bane where they might have come back to you in blessing. If you are in quest of something that is unhealthy and degraded, be sure it will recoil upon you—that very desire. God may gratify it, and by gratifying it punish you for entertaining it. A man who has given himself to evil becomes the victim of

evil. But if, on the other hand, every one of us here has clarified his desire. He who knoweth our heart's desire will not fail us in the day of its accomplishment. "You shall see of the travail of your soul and shall be satisfied. For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Desires answered*:—Compare this text with one from the Buddhist scriptures, which some writers are endeavouring to exalt to an equal rank with the Bible: "He who fosters no desires for this world or for the next, has no inclination; him I call a Brahmin" (the perfect man). The Buddhist heaven is Nirvana, a condition in which the soul has lost all interest and all sensitiveness, a dead life, a spiritual petrification, in which, as the stone is not hurt by the avalanche that crushes it, the soul can endure the crash of the universe. How different this to the Bible declaration, "We shall be satisfied with the fatness of Thy house!" Or, make the contrast between our text and the best practical philosophy of the ancients—that of the Stoics: Care for nobody, and you will not be bereaved; want nothing, and you cannot be robbed; have no hopes, and you will have no regrets. The Bible puts a light in the dead eye, and a fire in the cold heart. Descartes taught that wisdom was in limiting one's desires to the actual conditions of life. The Bible promises to expand the good to meet the utmost longings of the mind. Man's best expedient is to collapse the great voids in the heart as soon as possible; Christ's proposal is to enlarge and then fill them. Take this as an evidence that He who gave us the Bible is He who gave us being. (*Homiletic Review*.) *The Desires of the heart*:—It would be good to know how many of us assembled here for Christian worship this morning really believe that saying of the psalmist to be true; and how many of us shrug invisible shoulders, and regard it merely as a pious sentiment entirely unsupported by the facts of life! In every considerable assembly of men and women there must be many disappointed hearts. For the most part they are silent as well as disappointed. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," and when it is kindly it has no temptation to spill its gall into the sweetness of another life. Well, you are not going to break out into any violent form of revolt. You are not built like that. You have no intention of labelling yourself an agnostic. You don't mean to sneer at religion, or openly renounce belief in Christ! It is absurd to talk about the unbelief of the outside world, while there is such a lack of vital faith in the hearts of so many spiritually-minded Christian worshippers! The calm, confident Master of our life bids us—by all His life and teaching He bids us—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and follow after faithfulness; delight ourselves also in the Lord"; and all this with unshakable assurance that He shall give us the desires of our hearts. The true Christian experience makes all the coldness of stoicism an impossibility. Standing on the vantage-ground of love in the present, the believer in Christ is able, like his Master, to survey the past with hope and the future with faith. And now, seeing that we are all sharers more or less in the experience of failure and disappointment, and are thus all liable to moods of cynicism and lack of faith, let me ask you to consider about the Christian attitude towards the past—the present—and the future. I. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PAST. It is the attitude of hope. Hope for the past? Yes. It is an attitude taken up in full response to the psalmist's words, "Trust in the Lord," but with reasons and impulses behind it greater than the psalmist ever knew! All cynicism is rooted in past failure and disappointment, is it not? The young, with life and the world all before them where to choose, are never cynical. At least, never at first hand: they learn a second-hand language of cynicism sometimes! No; it is the Adam-experience in every man which begets a cynical disbelief in the godly meaning of life; the experience of the hatefulness of a thing that has happened—a deed that is done, and its inevitable consequences. It was Milton, you remember, who put into Adam's mouth the apparently hopeless words,

"The past who can recall, or done undo?  
Not God omnipotent nor fate."

And it is surely well that we should early recognize the awful responsibility that attaches to every action of our complex human life. Yet, according to the old Genesis story, the glorious promise of redemption was mingled with the pronouncement of man's punishment! Sin, failure, disappointment bulk so largely in the

past that it is not surprising they should cast their shadows over the present. Friends, it is those shadows of the past which must be subdued and driven away by hope. Masterlinck has written a wonderful essay on "The Past," which contains the very essence of the hope of Christian Gospel. Here is a paragraph of it, "'The past is past,' we say, and it is false; the past is always present. . . . 'Nothing can wipe out the past,' we say, and it is false; the least effort of will sends present and future travelling over the past to efface whatever we bid them efface. . . . 'My past is wicked, it is sorrowful, empty,' we say again, 'as I look back I can see no moment of beauty, of happiness or love; I see nothing but wretched ruins. . . .' And that is false; for you see precisely what you yourself place there at the moment your eyes rest upon it. Our past depends entirely upon our present, and is constantly changing with it. . . . Our chief concern with the past, that which truly remains and forms part of us, is not what we have done, or the adventures we have met with, but the moral reactions bygone events are producing within us at this very moment, the inward being they have helped to form." Now, the events of life constantly happening around us assure us that this is so. Look at those definite acts of sin committed in moments of sudden impulse by young people who seem to have been afflicted by an almost incurable lightness and frivolity of mind and heart. Well, they are done, beyond recall—they are of the past. Are they, therefore, changeless? Has the sinner who has committed them no control over them? True, they must go on working out some consequences which he cannot control; but he can still make of them for himself what he will. By his present attitude towards them they become either stones to roll upon the tomb of his own moral and spiritual life, or stones—like Jacob's pillow—whereon, lying down in repentance, he shall have visions of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the still possible upward-sloping stairway whose top reaches to heaven. Many a moral defeat has been the first awakening of a soul to the possibility of a moral victory. And as it is with past sin, so it may be with past sorrow, past failure, past disappointment. The Christian attitude of hope has power to transfigure and change them all! There is no sorrow which cannot be turned into joy. "Trust in the Lord." That grave you dug in the past was not so much a place of burial for earth's joy, as a sowing-ground for heaven's spiritual fellowship. You are better, if you have not allowed yourself to become worse, for being compelled to face the grimmest reality of earth's experience; and your dear one is worthier to be loved, having passed that holy way! That good thing you tried but failed to do is not the symbol of your weakness and ineffectiveness. Never think it. It is the indelible mark of your divine doom to future achievement! Every statue, every picture, every poem in the world is some artist's failure! Do you imagine that the painter found the sunset his spirit had seen in the sky, when he spread the colours of his palette on the canvas? Never. We can afford to fail in learning the way to succeed! That disappointment of yours, I care not what it was, was no proof that the best good is a delusion. The mirage of the desert is not a proof that there is no water anywhere. "Trust in the Lord," and regard your past—whatever it may contain—in the attitude of hope. II. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRESENT. It is an attitude of love! "Do good," says the psalmist. "Dwell in the land. . . . Delight thyself also in the Lord." That is what you have to do now. The attitude of hope towards the past is strictly conditional upon the attitude of love towards the present. You and I are not likely to "trust in the Lord" about that strangely mysterious past of ours, if we feel no impulse to love Him to-day. "Dwell in the land!" Well, we must. Here we are. In some fashion or other we are occupying the land of our inheritance. "Dwell in the land," is not so much an invitation as a command. We cannot help ourselves. Well, then, "Do good. . . . Delight thyself in the Lord." There is one command there, not two. The man who does good because it is good, and because he loves the good when he sees it, does delight himself in the Lord, whether he knows it or not. There are not two opinions in this church this morning about doing good. When the good and the evil course of action lie clearly before us we all know we ought to do the good, and in our heart of hearts we all desire to do it, and feel convicted of sin if we refuse. And the harder it is to do the good in the face of temptation to do the evil, the deeper and more abiding is that mysterious glow of gladness with which our hearts are so strangely warmed. That glow of gladness just means that, at such times, whether we recognize it or not, in doing good we are delighting ourselves in the Lord. "Delight thyself also in the Lord!"

Ah, well, that was easy a week ago, in the time of our sunshine, but not now! Then be very sure that you were not delighting yourself in the Lord a week ago, if you cannot do it now. You may have been delighting yourself in something pleasant He had given you. That is something very different from delighting yourself in Him. III. **THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FUTURE.** It is the attitude of faith. "Follow after faithfulness. . . . And He shall give thee the desire of thine heart." "Feed upon faithfulness," the margin says, that is, nourish your inner life with this spiritual food—"Faithfulness." What is exactly this attitude of faith towards the future? Let me answer you by quoting a beautiful passage I read the other day. A party of travellers was driving through lovely scenery within sight of the blue waters of the Mediterranean; one of them writes: "A short distance away, as we looked under the olive trees, across the ruddy clods and accidental wild flowers, were the innumerable dimples of the amiable sea. . . . 'Is it always like this?' asked Lamia. 'Far from it,' I was going to reply; but the Poet anticipated me. 'Yes, always, Lamia; always, always, always!'" No one deserves to travel who anticipates anything less agreeable than he is enjoying at the moment. Ah, then, this faith is self-delusion, after all, some of you will say. No, faith is the belief that the good and the beautiful must find issue in the best and the perfect! It is the assurance of the old poet Walt Whitman, who, looking back over a long life's work, set down as his last words,

"The strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung."

The desires of our hearts are better than we know; and it is only as we "trust in God and follow after faithfulness" that God can interpret to us the meaning of our own prayers, our own desires, and give us those better things which are hidden in all His promises. "And He shall give thee"—not merely the petitions of thy lips, for that is a little thing and often not good for us, but He shall give thee a far deeper and purer gift—even "the petitions of thy heart." (*A. E. Hooper.*)

**Ver. 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord.—Commit thy way:**—What more appropriate motto can we select for a new year? Counsel such as this is in itself a kind of revelation. It reveals us to ourselves! Is our way such that we can commit it to the Lord? Now, such committing of our way to God means—I. **MEDITATION BEFORE PRAYER.** "Meditation," says St. Ambrose, "is the eye wherewith we see God, and prayer is the wing wherewith we flee to Him." Prayer is not an accidental expression that comes suddenly to the mind; it is the soul's recognition of its need. And to pray aright we must have been alone with ourselves before we are alone with God. Bunyan said, "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart." II. **CONSCIOUSNESS OF IGNORANCE.** We say to God, "Thou and Thou only knowest the true path of life." Our ignorance is at times very humbling to us. We want to know all, and in reality we know so little. How terrible it would be if we could not commit our way unto God. How glad, then, should we be that God invites us at all times to come to Him. As Quarles says, "Heaven's never deaf but when man's heart is dark." III. **CONSCIOUS OBEDIENCE AND CHEERFUL ACQUIESCENCE IN HIS WILL.** Dependence must end in obedience. Owen says, "He who prays as he ought will endeavour to live as he prays." Can there be a more miserable man on earth than he who knows the hypocrisy of his prayers, who is inwardly conscious of his wrong state, who knows that he is living without God, and yet feels tremulous and sad about it all? He has not really returned to God. He has not realized again the value of the Saviour's friendship; he cannot forsake the indulgence of some secret sin; he cannot quite quit fellowships that are risking his immortal weal. The reverences of religion still touch him with awe, the piety of the early child-home is still a memory in his manhood; he despises men who have no religion. But his will is not obedient: it cannot be said of him that he is a follower of the Lamb. Let us not slight this aspect of the subject—committing our way means conscious obedience unto God. And not merely endurance, nor passive submission, but cheerful acquiescence. This lights the smile on the sufferer's face; this gives sunlight to the gloomy Catacombs. When the soul comes away from communion with God in this spirit, the ravens of anxiety and care forsake the heart. The world may know how to provoke mirth; it may amuse

with sallies of wit; it may excite with sensuous joys; but all through the ages cheerfulness has been the child of faith, and has seldom forsaken the sufferer even in life's last hours. IV. COMMITTING THE END TO GOD. When and where belong to Him. Life has been quite other than most of us thought it, and so probably will death be. It would be a mean thing to wish to commit the end to God and not all that leads to it—to rely on some mere death-bed repentance. So to live as to feel sure that when the evening comes we shall have nothing to do but to die, this is the Christian's heritage. And then let the curtains be rent suddenly, or taken down gently; let the light go out in a sharp gust, or burn down in the socket slowly; this surely is what we all wish to be able to say, "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (*W. M. Statham.*) *Confidence in God*.—I. THE CASE SUPPOSED. This psalm represents the case, to wit, the flourishing condition of the wicked to the great prejudice and hazard of God's people. He persuades us, in such instances, to confidence in God and patience in well-doing; and discovers the estate of pious and ungodly men to be as different, not only in the world to come, but through God's just judgment many times even in this life, as their principles and practices have been. II. THE DIRECTION, OR COUNSEL. 1. Committing our way unto the Lord, though it may be taken to signify the same as casting our burden upon Him (Ps. lv. 22), and casting our care upon Him (1 Pet. v. 7), yet, as "way" doth in Scripture use denote the course of life, the method and order of our conversation, I take it to comprehend these three things. (1) An entire obedience to the Word of God, as the rule of our actions. (2) A meek submission to the will of God, which governs human affairs. (3) A regular walking in the duties of our particular calling; leaving the rest, as things which we are not immediately concerned in, to God Almighty's disposal. 2. Trusting in God imports—(1) A fiducial reliance upon His wisdom and goodness in the care and conduct of our persons, and of all our concerns. (2) A declaration of that our dependence upon Him in earnest and frequent prayer. (3) And withal honest endeavours of our own for our preservation, in the use of all lawful means; holding ourselves still in that station wherein God hath placed us, and leaving the event to Him. (*A. Littleton, D.D.*) *The believer's present and future*.—I. THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT STATE. It is one of—1. Acceptance in the Beloved (Ps. lxxxix. 33). He may distress, but He will not disown. 2. Imperfection. He is, indeed, under the Holy Spirit's transforming hand. While justification is complete, sanctification is progressive, and therefore at every stage but the last, imperfect. 3. Sorrow (Rom. vii. 21; Gal. v. 17). The time for unmingled joy is not yet. Besides this, the refinement of the feelings which the Gospel produces frequently prepares the heart to feel, more acutely than many others, the usual crosses, losses, trials or bereavements which are the common lot of all. 4. Obscurity. The same unbelief which rejected the Saviour, with all the evidence He produced of His divine mission, serves the disciples as it served their Lord. Besides, the Christian is a mixture of opposites, and therefore we wonder not that he should appear in a doubtful light even to himself and his fellow-believers. 5. Eager expectancy (Heb. ix. 28; 2 Pet. iii. 12; Luke xxi. 28; Phil. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 2-4; Rom. viii. 23). II. THE EXPECTATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. We live between the two advents of our Lord, and the Bible teaches us to look back to the first to know how salvation was wrought, and forward to the second to know what salvation is. The first gives the title to it, the second will give possession of it. Faith looks back to the one, hope looks forward to the other. The Church of Christ will appear in its—1. Unity. 2. Holiness. 3. Resurrection glory. (*R. J. Rowton, M.A.*) *Quiet trust*.—After the fearful defeat of Jena in 1806, when Prussia went down before the cruel and reckless ambition of Napoleon, on no one did the throes of a nation's fall come with a more agonizing sense of ruin than on the young and beautiful Queen Louise. When she heard the news of the battle of Jena, and that she must leave her beloved home, she burst into uncontrollable weeping. How did she calm her anguish? It was the pious custom in Germany, when a pupil left school, to accompany the boy singing the thirty-seventh Psalm, of which the fifth verse is, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will bring it to pass." The young queen sat down to her piano and softly sang the psalm. When she rose her eye was clear, her spirit was tranquil. That same verse was also the comfort of David Livingstone during all his perils and fevers and fastings in scorching Africa and its desert wastes. (*Dean Farrar.*)



Vers. 7-11. **Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself.**—*The good man in trouble*:—Note the man contemplated. He is a man of real piety, and he is contrasted with the wicked. The wicked are spoken of, but he is spoken to. He is understood to be of a different class altogether. But he is at present in circumstances of trial, and the battle is rather going against him. He sees that which he knows not how to reconcile with the idea that "there is a God who judgeth in the earth." A great cloud is upon his spirits. I. **THE ADVICE GIVEN TO HIM.** 1. As to that which he is not to do. He is not to fret himself because of the prosperity of the wicked. It does not mean merely that he is not to be envious, not to indulge in that dark, malignant spirit. I think you must regard him as looking upon some of the great perplexing events of God's providence. There are a set of wicked men, whose diabolical skill and device are crowned with success. They are bound, perhaps, in a vigorous crusade against God, and against God's Church, and apparently are successful in their wicked endeavours. You are not to let such thoughts get down into your soul to weaken and destroy your faith in God. "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in the way." Then there is a second piece of advice, which I should say goes farther because things are getting worse—"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." It is not merely now a man looking upon that which is objective, and being rather disturbed by it; but things are coming near and touching him personally; the successful device has entangled him, and now passion is rising; he is getting excited; he has begun to imagine an opposite device, and thinks to overcome strength by strength. Now, he must guard against that, for if affliction have this effect the devil will have the victory then, and not God, in regard to his soul. After these two pieces of advice, which may both be considered negative, though they are put in positive forms—we come to that which is positive. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Do this by a filial trust, with an entire faith. Believe that the Lord lives, acts, governs. Simple advice, but easier to understand than to practise: for our tendency is, under such circumstances, to let go our hold on God. A man has an idea that he can do things better for himself, faith fails, and corruption gets the advantage. II. **WHY A MAN SHOULD REST IN THE LORD.** The first thing suggested is, that in spite of all appearances a man must hold to the great fact that there is a great, Divine, presiding personality, an observer, governor, judge—he must keep to that, and hold to that great truth. You, a religious man, having a religious faith in you! but what is your religion and faith good for, if it will not hold you to the primary truths of religion? The second thing suggested is, that the good man should understand that the laws and constitution of things are upon his side, that in the long run they will turn up to be on the side of righteousness, goodness, and virtue, that the working out of things will ultimately be against the bad. Whatever may be the primary prospect of the success of wickedness—evil-doers shall be cut off. Why, some of you have seen that fifty times over. "Dear me, I wonder what has become of so and so! I remember twenty years ago he was the most-talked-of man in London; but there was something very dark and suspicious about him. I wonder what has become of him. I have lost sight of him for many years." Another says, "I can tell you. All gone to nothing. He sunk, and sunk; all his splendour disappeared, and he gradually came down to poverty and his children too, and the very house in which he lived is in ruins." It is thus that things work out. Sometimes you do not observe the process, but presently, unexpectedly, you see the result of the working out of the law, "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be." And sometimes it is done otherwise, in a more palpable manner. "Into smoke shall they consume away." III. **GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND CARE SHALL WATCH OVER HIS OWN.** The little that a righteous man hath," etc. A religious life is favourable to life. This is the natural law. Those that wait upon the Lord may have sorrow for a night, but light is sown in the darkness, and joy will spring up with the day. "Yet a little time and the wicked shall not be. Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" yes, even though he should call his lands after his own name. I remember the circumstance of a man cutting his name into the stone upon his house, eight inches deep, because he was determined to go down to a remote posterity, upon the house which he had built for himself. I have seen the house, with the letters cut into the stone, almost a foot deep; and it is let now for a school. This may seem a simple matter. Aye, but simple matters illustrate great principles. It is in simple matters that God is most seen. **CONCLUSION.** 1. These principles apply to the

mildor afflictions which we at times are called on to suffer. 2. Whilst remembering the judgment that is coming upon the wicked if they do not repent, we are to pray for them that they may. 3. Lay to heart the truth that God, as surely as He lives, is on the side of right. You are not in the devil's world. He neither made nor governs it. Therefore keep to the right and the true, to religious faith and the side of God. (*T. Binney.*) *Rest for the troubled*:—I. **THE CONFIDENT REPOSE.** Rest in the Lord. Let us do so—1. In His all-sufficiency for reasonable and sufficient supplies. 2. In His wisdom for counsel and guidance. 3. In His power for protection. 4. In His truth and faithfulness for the fulfilment of His promises. 5. In His gracious love for all. II. **THE PRAYERFUL ENDURANCE AND EXPECTATION.** 1. "Wait patiently for" the Lord, for this is the only way of keeping our minds calm. 2. For His arrangements concerning our afflictions. (*R. M. Wilcox.*) *Christian resting and uniting*:—One of our hardest lessons is to find out the wisdom of our hindrances; how we are to be put forward and upward by being put back and put down. When the company in the "Pilgrim's Progress" had to sit up watching all night at the house of Gains, Greatheart kept them awake with this riddle, "He that would kill must first be overcome." And the truth in it has been practically dug out by trials that broke sleep through many a hard fortune in every Christian experience since. Yes, defeats help progress; a compulsory standing still helps us on. The Cross of Christ solves the riddle, and, gradually, to believing eyes the fact comes out. The precept, "Rest in the Lord," etc., seems at first too tame for a spiritual ambition. We ask for some positive doctrine, for a task worthy of our energies. "Sound a bugle note that calls to close contests and we will follow; but this is a poor, spiritless thing, this resting and waiting!" We must see, if we can, what force there is in this answer. Possibly, if we search deep enough, we shall find that where some of us fancy our religion ends, it is only feebly begun. I. **GOODNESS IS NOT SO MUCH SPECIFIC DEEDS AS A FAITHFUL HEART**: it is being, rather than doing, though sure to lead to right doing. If the principle is true, what is often called passive goodness is the necessary condition, nay, the interior fountain of active goodness. A man, that is, must be a silent believer in his heart before he can be a powerful Christian worker with his arms, or speaker with his lips. He must pray in his closet before he can honour his Maker in the multitude or shop, in pulpit or street. II. **COMPARE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VIRTUES, AND SEE WHAT EACH REQUIRES TO RESTRAIN IT.** 1. Submission—if there be any distinction between these virtues—would fall on the side of the passive graces. But in all the compass of human achievements there is not one that more tasks the stoutest energies of the soul, not one that demands a more resolute gathering up of all the resolution left. And yet men speak of it, of this resting in the Lord, as one of your passive, secondary, ignoble virtues. 2. So, too, with gentleness of temper and of speech. There is natural amiability, but that has cost no struggle. But do we not know some persons that need all the weapons in the Christian armoury, and all the watchfulness of the camp, to reach that plain achievement, the "soft answer" that "turneth away wrath"? So, then, the passive virtues, as they are called, are those that require the greatest effort, and, according to Christ, are therefore of the greatest worth. All the nine beatitudes, with, perhaps, one exception, pronounce their blessing on what the world would call tame and passive traits. So does Christianity turn upside down the vulgar vanity of our ambition, and empty our worldliness of blessedness. But the subject reaches on to wider applications yet. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," is—III. A **COUNSEL ADDRESSED TO THE HABIT AND TENDENCY OF THESE TIMES**; and no time perhaps ever needed to listen to it more; a time more eager to conquer the world by putting girdles of intelligence and bonds of travel about it, than to feel its dependence on Heaven; readier to run, to work, to build, to ask questions, to yoke the elements, than to kneel, to believe, to have patience and to pray. But the strength of a community is not in its enterprising, self-confident, profane or prayerless great men, but in the men, be they few or many, who while they are "diligent in business," and faithful in public spirit, "rest" secretly "in the Lord," and "wait patiently" every day "for Him." IV. See again, **WHAT BESIDES RIGHTEOUS LABOUR SUCH A STILLNESS SUPPOSES.** To wait patiently for God is to hold the heart open for what God gives. Subjection, then, it implies. It is to expect His love; and so it implies the penitence that goes before pardon. It is to believe He will give and guide; and so it implies faith. And it implies, too, self-restraint, self-renunciation, prayer, thanksgiving; and these are not the elements of man's

infirmity. We must not be surprised that men are so slow to learn this lesson. When it is learnt, then will Christ's kingdom have come. Let us help it forward as we best can. Meanwhile, we must rest and wait. So, too, in regard to the manifold sins and sorrows of human life: the slowness of our own growth in goodness; the secret sorrows of our homes—in regard to all them, and every other like to them, take the precept of our text. Let one subject regulate our judgments of one another: save us from morbid discontents, and cause to abide ever "in the Lord," that we may rest in Him. (*S. T. Huntingdon, D.D.*)

*Resting in the Lord.*—Rest and security are sought universally, but seldom found. The want of interior quiet is felt by every one; it is the deepest desire of our being, but it is pursued wisely only by a few. That the Lord intended man to enjoy rest may be known by these three considerations; first, He has made it the inmost affection of every human being; secondly, restlessness is destructive to the health of both mind and body; thirdly, God has assured us in His Word, and provided in His works, that we may come into a state of rest. 1. It may not appear at first sight evident that the demand for rest is an interior feeling in every one. Yet very little reflection will make it plain. (1) Under the restless garb of the busiest of mankind abides the constant desire to procure a sufficiency. Look at the energetic tradesman; he seems incessantly active; he labours early and late; nothing seems so foreign to him as rest. Yet let him unbosom himself, and you will find all this activity arises from a wish to secure the means of attaining a secure rest in his declining years. He believes he can only be satisfied in the gratification of his desires, and when he has won all that his wishes require, he will recline in peace and enjoy rest. (2) The rest, which is the inward aim of the soul, and to which every man may attain, is foreshadowed by the contentment of little children, though theirs is the peace of ignorance, not the peace of wisdom. They find their wants supplied, and they have no cares. They have full confidence in the love of their parents, and no doubt as to their power. 2. We may be assured that rest is intended to be enjoyed by us in this world from the circumstance that restlessness disturbs and destroys the health of both mind and body, and is therefore in contrariety to the laws which build up both. Opposites cannot come from God. 3. We are invited, by frequent calls in the Word, to rest on the Divine love and wisdom. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*)

*Waiting upon God.*—"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (*Ps. xxxvii. 7.*) This is not a call to indolence, but to action enveloped in repose. In all probability the writer was one of the leading men of action of his age. Our deeds should have their origin and their completion in patient waiting. (1) Restfulness is the preparation for service; it is the interior fountain of active goodness. The man that would give must first receive. (2) Restfulness should be the spirit in which action is concluded. The fretful anxiety which looks back upon faithful work is a denial of God and a weakening of the soul. This is a call to service with the fret taken away. There is no true rest for man save in the thought of God. Aubrey de Vere relates a conversation he had with Wordsworth in Lakeland. The poet remarked that travellers boasted much of Swiss mountains because they were two or three times as high as the English, but he added, "I reply that the clouds gather so low on them that half of them remain commonly out of sight." His visitor did not wish to contradict him, and so the poet went on declaiming. "You cannot see those boasted Swiss mountains when the clouds hang low." "Certainly not," replied the prudent visitor. Then, after a pause, his veracity prevailed, and he added, "But I must admit you know that they are there." "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my strength." Sometimes the clouds gather, but it makes all the difference to life to know that "the hills" are there. "We rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." I. THIS SPIRIT OF PATIENT WAITING IS IN ITSELF A HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. In religion all means are ends, and all ends only means to some larger end. Repentance is not only a condition of salvation, but also a part of the work; it is an indication of a deep change which God works within the heart. To wait patiently upon the Lord is a means of grace, but it is also a feature of a lofty spirit. Our God is the "God of patience." How patiently He waits as Creator—not at once, but slowly have order and beauty emerged from chaos; how patiently He stands as the World Redeemer, while men scourge and revile and spit at Him, and crown Him with thorns, and smite Him with their hands! He waits patiently "to see of the travail of His soul," and is able to breathe the spirit of calm, fearless, hopeful endurance into all His people. II. THIS SPIRIT OF

PATIENT WAITING IS NECESSARY FOR THE HIGHEST AND MOST PERMANENT SERVICE. In Mr. Winston Churchill's Life of his father we have the story of one who had it in him to be one of the most influential workers of his age, but who failed because he was all impulse, impatience, restlessness, and left little behind save the memory of a most pathetic career. After his conspicuous blunder he wrote to his wife from Mafeking: "Well, I have had quite enough of it all. I have waited with patience for the tide to turn, but it has not turned, and will not now turn in time. All confirms me in my decision to have done with politics and try to make a little money for the boys and ourselves." That is the secret of impermanent service—"the tide has not turned, and will not turn now in time." In whose time? Man has no right to fix the time. Of the hour knoweth no man, but only the Father. Our times are in His hand. How patiently Christ waited; for thirty years He waited in obscurity for the ministry to begin. He remained hopeful in the presence of the cross, the symbol, it would seem, to others, of everlasting defeat and shame. III. THIS SHOULD BE A MESSAGE OF COMFORT TO US AMID LIFE'S PAINFUL PERPLEXITIES. One night Henry Drummond sat up with a young man who had lost himself in philosophical speculations. "I seem to be walking round and round and arriving nowhere," he said sadly, "and I am thoroughly tired of it all." "True," said Drummond, "but you are not too tired to lie down." The psalmist had been wandering in the same bewildering way. He had fretted himself because of the prosperity of evil-doers; all his theological ideas had been disturbed by the "little that the righteous hath and the abundance of many wicked." But he was not too tired to lie down, and to the weary in every age he proclaims the glad restfulness of the soul in God. There are times when reason fails us. (*Trevor H. Davies.*) *Rest in the Lord*:—It was more difficult for David to do this, than for us to do it. He had more at stake, and less to help him; he had all the mysteries which beset us, and many more peculiar to his age and to the dispensation under which he lived. He found it harder than we do, to sever temporal disasters from Divine inflictions; and yet he could use this inspiring language, and summon his brothers to rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him. But men now seem only too disposed not to trouble themselves: fatalism, and indifference to unseen things, are so common that advice very different from David's is often imperatively needed. But the world's rest and quietness is only an apparent one, not real. I. THE REST OF WEARIINESS. The body rests; it is this rest which "knits up the ravelled sleeve of care," which is "sore labour's bath," "balm of hurt minds," "great nature's second course," "chief nourisher in life's feast." All life is submitted to this law. The leafless winter, the hushed songsters of the forest, the infant slumbering on its mother's breast, the sealed eyes of the shipboy cradled on the surge, and all the "magic of night as she moves from land to land and touches all with her opiate wand," tell the same story. Work demands rest, and rest is the stimulus of work. The intellect itself must have its quiet places and still retreats, where holy calm, and unconscious growth, and secret renovation, repairs its losses. Further, weariness comes at times even to the relief of the spiritual faculty, and gives the half-awakened spirit its first lessons in the mighty art of faith. Perhaps we have been eagerly seeking to reconcile God's truth to our own standards; to adjust Jehovah's attributes for Him; to enter the kingdom of heaven like a man, with violence, and not as "a little child." Perhaps we have been striving to fill up the bottomless abyss of need in our hearts with our own merits, and we find the undertaking impossible. Now, at length, beaten with the struggle, and ceasing our efforts, we may be taking an enforced rest; we may just lie quiet for a time, and this may seem to be "a rest in God"; while, on the contrary, it is only an inevitable pause in our fruitless endeavour, a lull of energy by which the mind recovers its power of self-infliction. But if, on the other hand, we will go simply, humbly, trustingly to God as our Father, then rest may be found. Better far to learn the lesson of faith, and so be filled with peace, resting in the Lord. II. THE REST OF STRENGTH. This is a far higher thing than that we have now considered. It is a voluntary rest, which is to some extent within our own power; it is a sign of vigour rather than weakness, of strong will rather than of over-taxed effort. This rest of conscious strength is closely associated with every Christian grace, and is as necessary to our success in the conflicts of the divine life, as it is to the culture of our higher nature. Neither faith, nor hope, nor love can be maintained within us without the rest of faith, the rest of hope, and the rest of love. Faith fights a good fight, which requires, however, that it rest in God. And hope, too,

needs to rest in the fruition of that which God has given. And love is quickened by quiet hours of patient waiting for the Lord. Prayer, also, and work depend on resting in the Lord. It often requires all our strength "to sit still" and believe in the love of God, and even to augment our confidence in that love, when what we think to be our proper interests are disregarded, and apparently trifled with, and perhaps in our view utterly sacrificed. The philosopher maunders to us about "general laws," and "the good of the whole"; the unaffected Christian does what is little better, he suggests a few of the commonplaces of consolation. "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust!" III. I have now briefly to allude to a third form of this great duty and privilege—**THE REST OF VICTORY WHICH FLOWS OUT OF DEEP FAITH**; that peace with God which Jesus gives, which passes all understanding. Here patience has her perfect work, and is entire, wanting nothing. "The Lord is my Shepherd," says the holy psalmist, "I shall want nothing." (*H. Reynolds, D.D.*) *Stillness in God*:—The trial for which this precept is intended to strengthen us is the irritation to which all are tempted by the sight of successful wickedness. But there shall be a setting right of all such seeming injustice. But the precept has a wider application than this. I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HOLDING OURSELVES STILL IN GOD. The word "still" means "hold thee in stillness upon God." It is the quality of mind which is the opposite of restlessness. And we are to "hold still in God" in reference both to things temporal and things spiritual. Restlessness has a twofold sort of bitterness which trust in God must extirpate. 1. It springs from dissatisfaction with the present, or from anxiety about the future. There is a deep melancholy in the heart of every man, bound up in the very bundle of his life, which, like the breath of myrrh, is ever ready to spread itself over all his being; and in spirits of the deepest tone there is most of this: it is the yearning after our true portion, but it will make all life restless unless we learn to lean upon God, believing that He is Truth and Love, and is ours through Christ Jesus. In common life this must be our rest; and in great sorrow too. Then we must learn to be at rest, not indeed by striving unnaturally not to feel sorrow, but by our taking the sorrow from God. It is not being sanguine, but being trustful, that is required of us. 2. And in things spiritual the precept is just the same. Stillness the very opposite of self-trust, which is the common root of these two false schemes—seemingly so opposite—of the spiritual life—the life of the mere formalist, and that of him who is engaged in a heart-eating searching into his own frame and feelings. For both are building on self, not on God. It is not that silence of spirit, that meditation and stillness, that uniting upon God which are so closely connected with true religion. And this stillness is, perhaps, that feature of religion which is most seldom to be met with in our day. It is a busy age, and we love activity. We need to be silent before God in order to realize our personal reconciliation with Him through the blood of Atonement, to walk in His Spirit, to spend our lives as His obedient, trusting children. Now, this is the essence of Christianity. II. IT IS MOST BLESSED, both in regard to our temporal life and that which is spiritual. For in it we become transformed and bear God's impress. All growth is silent. It is not in the lordly storm, or in the over-mastering hurricane that Nature puts forth her powers of growth and increase. It is amidst the drenching dews, in the still dawning of the spring-time, that the leaf unfolds itself, and the tender shoot steals upwards. And these works of nature are all symbols of the inner growth. In times of quietness the heart unfolds itself before God. If you would grow in grace, enter into thy closet and shut to thy door upon the world; shut it most of all upon thy busy unresting self, and then God shall speak to thee. How silent, surely, is an angel's heart when God is nigh; how is self hushed there; how, as some earthly vapour by the sun, is every power of His mighty being drawn up into adoration! And this truly is to know Him. III. HOW ARE WE TO GROW IN THIS GREAT GRACE? And, first, need I say, that such growth must be the work of His grace. That it is not natural to us; that nothing is, indeed, less natural. Only the Spirit brooding over our hearts can secure this. He renews, calms, cools, purifies them. He who said to the waves, "Peace, be still," must create this great calm. Therefore must we draw near to God if we would win so great a blessing. This must be our rule. Draw near to Him in the covenant of His Son's blood: to Him as the Loving, the True, the Great: as Love, as Truth, as Holiness, as Power, gathered into one adorable Person; one real Being; and that Being your portion, your friend, your rest: for "this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast

sent." (*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*) *Rest in the Lord*:—Our text being where it is in this psalm is an instance of the great rule that the Lord does nothing by halves. In verse 1 the Lord found His servant liable to fretfulness and envy, and exhorted him to cease from fretting; and He did not stay the operation of His grace till He had perfected that which concerned him, and brought him up to the elevated point of our text, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Rest is a blessing which properly belongs to the people of God, although they do not enjoy one tithe so much of it as they might. So let us consider—I. *THE STEPS TO THIS ROYAL CHAMBER OF REPOSE.* They are shown in this psalm—1. "Fret not thyself." You are not in the fields among the wild beasts; cease to hunt them: Come within doors into your Father's house. Come away from contact with worldlings. The griefs which make the ungodly pine are not for you. Then—2. When you have thus come out of the field into the palace of love, the first staircase is described as "trust and do." "Trust in the Lord and do good." Not a dead faith which will not serve you at all, but one which will "do" as well as receive. It is through the exercise of faith that comfort comes to the heart. When thou hast learned this lesson, thou wilt have ascended a noble staircase of the royal palace, and it will land thee in the King's dining-room, where it is written, "Verily thou shalt be fed." If thou hast a living, active faith, thou shalt be provided for. Leave the fields, and thy brethren sowing there, who are complaining that their Father never gave them a kid to make merry with their friends—leave them and come up this first staircase of active faith, and sit down where a feast is spread. Then—3. Ascend higher, and climb the next staircase, which is marked "Delight and desire." "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Think what a good God thou hast; yea, what a blessed God He is. We have mounted now to the royal treasury, the King's almonry. Here He bids you open all your heart, and pour forth your desires, for He will satisfy them. But you are not up to the royal rest-chamber yet. 4. Climb another stair, marked, "Commit thy way and trust." All the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. What hast thou to do in ordering thine own way? Now, this brings us into the undressing-room, which stands side by side with the royal bedchamber. Take off the dusty garments of thy cares and commit them to the Lord. Strip thyself of all thy anxieties, and leave thy worn and travel-stained raiment. Then enter the quiet chamber and take your rest; "Rest in the Lord." II. *THE REST.* 1. It is a rest of mind, a sense of security and fixedness. 2. Contentment. 3. Immoveable confidence. 4. Submission to all God's will. The Hebrew is, "Be silent to God." One of the old versions reads it, "Hold thou still before God." 5. Patient waiting. Feel that you can waive your desires, and tarry the Lord's leisure. 6. Peace, unmixed calm. 7. Expectation, especially in regard to the Kingdom of God. Do not fret about that. III. *THE ROYAL CHAMBER.* "Rest in the Lord," in Himself. 1. As your covenant God. 2. As your Father. 3. In His attributes. 4. His word. 5. His will. So that we can say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Resting and waiting*:—I. *THE MEANING OF THE WORDS.* There are many passages which breathe a similar spirit. 1. The meaning here is implied by contrast—see the beginning of the psalm, as to fretting; anxious, worldly care; the unrest of the wicked, of which sin is the great cause. 2. Then think of the Lord Himself, and we see that to rest in Him is to trust in Him, and to be still and silent in our trust: resting, we wait in patient hope and in the assurance of love. II. *THEIR APPLICATION.* This fitting when—1. We are troubled about the slow progress of the Gospel. Or, 2, about the general dispensations of God's providence. The wicked prosper. Our own personal trials, temporal and spiritual. But resting in the Lord is the secret of the highest life, the truest strength and the richest blessedness. (*G. L. Jarman.*) *Rest in the Lord*:—1. It may need to be a quiet waiting. The word "rest" literally means that—"Be silent to the Lord." The best thing may be, at times, to wait quietly. There once was an alarm of fire in a crowded hall, and a general rush was made to the door. The alarm proved to be a false one, and by and by the people got back to their seats. It was noticed, however, that one little girl had not moved, and on being asked why, it turned out that her father was a member of the fire brigade, and that he had often impressed upon her that if ever she found herself in a situation of that kind, she was to sit still. That is what God often told His servants of old, and what He tells us yet through His Word, with regard to trying experiences; but how hard to learn the lesson, and obey! "Their strength is to sit still." 2. But, assuredly, it should

be a hopeful waiting. Let not the stillness be mere torpor. Let not the dumbness be numbness. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him," says the psalmist; and that word "yet" is the keynote of the whole psalm. Perhaps the highest and most difficult thing of all, however, is that it be a patient waiting. Hope may be deferred, the dawn may seem never to be coming, and yet be patient—patient. "All will come right," are the words put on the tombstone of President Brand, a late President of the Orange Free State. It was a remark he was in the habit of making in his lifetime. If our trust be in God, may we not take them up too? (*J. S. Maver, M.A.*) *The believer's rest*:—I. REST FROM WANDERING. O my heart, how thou didst wander, like a weary pilgrim, through the Egypt of thy bondage! Thou didst wander to Sinai, where thou didst hear the law that made thee tremble. Thou didst wander across the wilderness of Sin, where thy good works vexed and tired thee, and thine evil works, like fiery serpents, bit thee; but that is all over now. My soul, thou hast crossed the Jordan, and having found Christ thou hast no inclination to wander more. II. REST FROM ALL OUR FOES. III. REST IN THE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE. In this meaning of the word we do really "rest in the Lord." We are not Christians if we do not, for the very first mark of a believer is that he rests in Christ for everything. Whatever need thou hast, rest thou on the bare arm of God to supply it. IV. REST IN THE SENSE OF SAFETY. V. PERFECT REST FROM WEARINESS. We read in Isaiah's prophecy, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest;" and I know there are some weary ones here. You are not weary of God's work, but you are weary of bearing Christ's cross, you have had so much shame and so much sorrow; well, "rest in the Lord." VI. THE REST OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. Either Christ completed all that was necessary for your salvation, or He did not. If He did finish it, then rest in Him, and be glad. VII. THE REST OF COMPLETE SATISFACTION. Having Christ, we want nothing more. If we go up or down, to the right or to the left, we can find nothing beyond our Lord. VIII. THE REST OF CONSCIOUS ENJOYMENT. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Silent and patient waiting for the Lord*:—I. REST IN THE LORD. 1. This implies that we are the Lord's people. (1) By the enlightenment of our minds, the forgiveness of our sins, the regeneration of our nature, and adoption into the family of God. (2) By separation from the unclean, by self-dedication to God, and by solemn covenant engagements. 2. Being the Lord's, we should rest in Him. 3. To rest in the Lord is to be silent in the Lord. Be still; and think not hard thoughts of God, because He permits thee to suffer. Be still; and murmur not against the Lord, because He does not deliver thee at once out of thy distresses. II. WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM. 1. "Wait" signifies to be strong, firm, stable; to wait, stay, delay: to wait for, to await, from the notion of enduring, holding out, which is kindred with that of strength. It signifies to wait upon God in prayer, with faith and patience. 2. "Wait patiently"—however long. 3. "For Him." To wait for the Lord is to wait for His promised help, and to hope in Him for deliverance out of all our troubles. Hope in God maketh not ashamed. His help will come, if we wait; His help will be sufficient when it does come. (*H. O. Crofts, D.D.*) *The gate to the waiting-place*:—When a man has once come into right relations with God, has begun to live for others rather than for self, when his desires are summed up in the prayer—"Thy kingdom come," he is apt to grow uneasy as he sees how slow the Divine kingdom is in coming, and how many indications there are of the presence and tremendous power of another and hostile kingdom in society. This psalm is addressed to a soul which is confused and alarmed by this aspect of the world. Over against it all it sets the great truth—"God reigns," and the consequent precept—"Trust in Him." "Yes," is the reply, "but He is so long in bringing it to pass: He makes me wait so long." So He does, and probably will; and it is this side of the lesson of faith in God which I want to bring out of this psalm—the lesson of waiting. 1. We are to wait unwaveringly (ver. 34). God brings men to His consummations only by His own road. And this is often a severe trial of faith. It is as when one has been travelling for long hours over a rough road, amid storm and mist, with night drawing on, looking, as he gains the top of every successive hill, for the spires of the city to which he is going, and seeing instead only a new stretch of dreary road, and a new hill to be climbed—he is tempted to think his guide has lost the way, and to take matters into his own hands. To the man who waits on God it is indispensable that he trust his guide. 2. To wait on the Lord rightly is to wait cheerfully. "Fret not thyself," says the psalmist (ver. 1), "because of evil-doers;" and again (ver. 8),

"frat not thysel in any wise to do evil." You have seen two children bidden by their parent to wait in a certain place for an hour, until he should return, or until some promised pleasure should be prepared: and you have seen the one cheerfully occupy himself with a book or with some object at hand, while the other, though he obeyed the command to remain, fretted, and watched the clock, and wondered when father would return, and was angry because he did not come sooner, and began to fear that he would not come at all, and so made himself generally miserable until the hour had expired. Thus, obedience is not always cheerful; and just in proportion to its lack of this element, it is defective. For obedience is of the very nature of faith. 3. We may wait confidently. The psalm backs its exhortations by numerous promises (vers. 3, 4, 6, 29). Look especially at verse 23. We have been watching the course of a man in God's way—a traveller who is long in coming to the end—on whom God's providence imposes various and trying delays. To the eye of reason it seems as though the man were walking aimlessly; as though his life, with its continual interruption, and confusion, and stumbling, and baffling, were an utter, irredeemable failure. And so it seems not only to reason, but to weak faith. There have come times to most of us when we have lost out of our lives all sense of plan or order, and have just gone on from day to day, doing and taking what the day brought with it. We have thought, I say, that those were disordered periods. They were not. Did you ever study the waves of the ocean? If so, you have noticed that each wave was full of little, irregular swirlings and eddies, moving in all possible directions. And if you could fasten your eyes upon a square foot of that water and shut out all the rest, you might say that it was a mere watery chaos; but when your eye takes in the whole wave, you see that a common movement propels its whole mass, and takes up into itself all these minor movements, and bears them on with the regularity of a marching host. So these spaces of apparent confusion in our lives are not out of order. They are carried on in the larger order of God's plan. Perhaps we cannot see the whole movement, but it bears steadily and continuously onward, every incident, every crossing and confusion of incidents swept on at God's own rate, and in nice adjustment with God's own plan. Mark, too, that the "steps" are ordered. The whole way is ordered, it is true, but ordered through the steps. Just as gravitation acts upon each separate particle of the stone which rolls down the mountain-side, so God's general providence reaches its result through the special providences. The philosopher sneers at the marking of the sparrow's fall; but it is in the ordering of just such details that God fulfils Himself in history. So our lives are what their details are. The only thing we are to be careful about is that we step each time in God's track. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Patient waiting upon God*:—There are many who may wait, but they do not wait patiently upon God. They soon lose heart and lose expectation. They think that everything is against them, because in the little space that they can cover, and the little vision that they possess, they cannot discern that for which they wait. This is especially the case with Christian men in their Christian work. They want the reaper to tread upon the very heels of him that sows the seed. They wish to gather in the harvest almost as soon as they have ploughed the soil or cast in the grain. They forget that they are fellow-workers with God, and that God's working-day is all time and all eternity. They lose heart and lose faith, and then very speedily they cease to work altogether. It is still more difficult to bear suffering patiently than to serve and to do duty patiently. It is much more easy to bear a heavy affliction, if it be short, than to bear a long affliction, though it be light. In the one case the stroke may stun us, but we may speedily recover and gain new strength and fresh hope. In the other case, the long, weary, exhausting affliction seems to wear out all elasticity, all strength, and all hope in the soul. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," and when that hope is long deferred it often breaks the heart altogether. Hope is the grace of the young; patience is the grace of the mature. Hope is the flush of the morning-dawn, bright and glad some, indeed; patience is the setting sun in its golden softness and beauty, gilding and crowning the last hours of the day. Hope enters into the battle full of expectation, and confidence, and strength; patience is the virtue of the veteran who has gained it in many a struggle, in many a march, and in many a triumph. It is much more easy to work energetically if the day of service be short, than to work patiently, faithfully unto the long day's end; and it is much more easy to bear the shower that drenches you than to bear the drizzling mist that comes down and wraps you in coldness and chill. (*J. Jenkyn*)



**Brown.) Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way.—The prosperity of the wicked considered:—I. WITH REGARD TO GOD.** Though prejudice is too apt to whisper that God's ways are not equal, yet a very little serious reflection on His wisdom and justice, and the ends of His various dispensations, together with our own undeservings, would effectually calm all anxious concern or repining on this account. And to any one that shall be so impertinent as to require satisfaction as to God's distributions, our Saviour's answer to St. Peter may be a sufficient reply: "If I will" that it be thus or thus, "what is that to thee?" **II. WITH REGARD TO THE PERSONS SAID TO BE THUS PROSPEROUS.** Would we allow ourselves leisure to view the precipice which the most exalted sinner stands upon, how unsure his footing, how liable to be shaken by opposition from below, or the hand of vengeance from above, and how much more fatal a fall may be from so dangerous an height; we should find nothing so tempting in it as to raise our discontent, or provoke one wish to change an innocent inglorious safety for so hazardous an eminence. **III. WITH REGARD TO OURSELVES.** We come all into the world alike naked and defenceless; and it is to the same bountiful hand, which clothes the lilies of the field, we owe our food and raiment. Now, if these are sufficient for our support and even well-being, and all beyond what is requisite for our comfort and convenience, be allowed to be more than what is strictly necessary; why should we quarrel with Providence for not loading us with what, by our own confession, is superfluous, and therefore insignificant to any useful purpose? Do we do well to be angry, if, having a proper competency, we want only what would be a clog and incumbrance? Nay, even though the Almighty should reduce, instead of exalting us, and assign us trouble and disgrace, where perhaps we might hope for a better lot; yet will it not be difficult to find a lenitive for this grievance. Add to this, that a contented deportment, under adversity or distress, is the most probable means of engaging the Almighty to withdraw His scourge. (*J. Roe, M.A.*) **The folly of fretful envy of the wicked:—I. THE PASSION RANKING IN THE HEART HAS AN EVIL TENDENCY.** 1. It inflicts an injury on the soul of its possessor. Malign passions are to the soul what the legions of locusts are to the vegetation of the East—they eat up the life. Aye, worse than locusts, they are fiends, kindling fires that burn down to the very centre of being, and reduce to ashes the better parts of human nature. 2. It stimulates to the infliction of injury upon others. "Anger stirreth up strife." Men, under the influence of anger, are ever disposed to mischief; their tongues deal out slander, their hands are lifted in battle, and their feet are "swift to shed blood." **II. THE CONNECTION OF THE WICKED WITH THE EARTH IS NOT ENVIABLE.** 1. It is exposed to a violent termination. "Evil-doers shall be cut off." It is said the "wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness." He does not leave the world with a free will. All his sympathies, interests, hopes, are rooted in the earth, and he will hold on to the last with the energy of desperation; still he must go. 2. It is utterly unsatisfying. **III. THEIR OPPOSITION BRINGS ON THEM TERRIBLE MISERY.** 1. The seed of the serpent has from the beginning had a venomous animosity to the good. This animosity is here represented (1) As cunning, it "plotteth against the just"; it is fertile in schemes of ruin. (2) As raging. It "gnasheth upon him." Like the hidden fire of the volcano, it reveals itself by terrible vibrations. (3) As practical. Plan and passion will not satisfy it, it must work, and work with more implements than one—"sword and bow." In how many ways the wicked labour to beat down the ideas, thwart the plans, and wound the feelings of the righteous! 2. But all this opposition only brings ruin on themselves. The ruin involves (1) The contempt of Jehovah. Can the boldest imagination create a figure to give a more terrible representation of misery than this—the "laugh" of the Infinite? Sooner let Him hurl His thunders at me, and rain down His fires on my spirit than laugh at me. (2) The recoil of their own purposes. "Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken." A remarkable instance of the kind may be found in Esther (chaps. v.-vii.) in the case of Haman. A straightforward course is easy, and men are safe in it; but it requires more skill than most men are endowed with to manage a crooked and crafty policy safely, or so as to be safe themselves in pursuing such a course. (*Homilist.*)

**Ver. 8. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.—Fretfulness:—I. It is a SIN AGAINST GOD.** *Cæsar* having prepared a sumptuous feast for his nobles and friends, the day appointed for it proved so inclement, that all went wrong. He

was so much out of temper on this account, that he commanded all who had bows to shoot their arrows upward toward Jupiter, their chief god, as being the cause of their disappointment. The silly order was obeyed, but the arrows, instead of striking the mark aimed at, fell back with violence on their own heads. Thus, also, the inconsiderate complaints of the fretful are, in fact, arrows shot in defiance against the majesty of God, but certain to hurt none but those who send them. II. IT IS SURE TO DESTROY AFFECTION, AND IS THE BANE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS. Husbands, wives, children, relatives, or servants have little real love for the fretful and the fault-finding. III. IT OFTENTIMES ENCOURAGES AND CULTIVATES A SPIRIT OF HYPOCRISY in those who are brought under its baneful influence. Everybody is afraid of arousing the unhappy disposition and calling down the tempest on their own heads. Hence children and servants get into the habit of concealing all they possibly can from those who are so little disposed to make allowance and to forgive. They cannot get up their courage to be frank and open-hearted, and deceit and falsehood are the consequence. Fretfulness is always foolish; always a thing to be sorry for and ashamed of. Bitterness, harshness, and fault-finding are the offspring of it—and these are no agreeable inmates of the soul. However uncomfortable and hard our lot may be, it certainly will not make matters better to be sour with the world, and crusty and crabbed to those about us. (*John W. Norton.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth.**—*The character and blessedness of the meek:*—I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS. It stands opposed to—1. Hastiness and violence of temper. 2. That of the haughty and vindictive. 3. That which is positive, dogmatical and unteachable. II. WHAT IS DECLARED CONCERNING SUCH CHARACTERS. Whatever opinion the world may form of them, they are highly privileged and blessed. They "shall possess the earth, and be refreshed," nay, even "delight themselves in the multitude or abundance, of peace." They may not have the largest share of earthly good things; but they are the men who will ever have the purest and most proper enjoyment of what God has allotted them. In this view, "better is a little that the righteous hath, than great riches of the ungodly." But the meek-spirited are here represented as not only possessing tranquillity or peace, but the multitude, the abundance thereof; and as being not only refreshed, but delighted therein. Gracious tempers, the fruits of the Spirit, are conducive to present felicity as well as preparatives for future glory: there is both peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. (*S. Knight, M.A.*) *Christian meekness:*—Is it to the future only, or also to the present, that such a promise as this may be said to have respect? We believe assuredly that it relates to both. There is a large and beautiful sense in which the meek do already inherit the earth. But there is something too expansive in the words to allow of our supposing the present to be their perfect fulfilment. From the very character which they bear, the meek for the most part are trampled on and oppressed; so that in place of being given over to their sway, the earth is most commonly wrenched from their possession. But if the promise mark out to us a season when the rebellious shall have been swept from the globe, when the saints of every generation shall assemble from the sepulchres, and shall reign with their Lord over a renovated world, then indeed, we may literally maintain—"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." First of all, who are the "meek"? We go to Christ for a description of meekness, and we gather that we should be forbearing, forgiving, patient under injuries and contradictions. But distinguish between that meekness which may be only the effect of constitution, and another which is the clear produce of grace. Natural virtues belong only to man's animal soul, and must not be confounded with the properties and virtues over which death has no power. With many men there is so much amiableness of temper that though strangers altogether to religion, they deserve to be called "meek" in the common acceptance of the term. In many cases, this constitutional meekness, if rigidly examined, will be found to spring from a love of ease; at all events, it is a mere quality of the animal soul, and ought not to be substituted for that holy meekness which Jesus exhibited. Christian meekness is in the largest sense compatible with Christian boldness, so that he who will submit to taunts and injuries, and give only prayers in return for revilings and wrongs, may yet in the hour of a nation's danger, or the Church's peril, rise up as a hero with the fire in his eye, and nerve in his arm, to stand against a host

for his country and his God. Christian meekness must chiefly result, first from a deep sense of our own unworthiness; and, secondly, an earnest love of our fellow-men. He who is humble in the meek consciousness of his own vileness as a sinner, will invariably be averse from all overbearing; and he who is zealous for the well-being of others will forbear and forgive, and keep down resentment, however injurious the conduct of others. Thus, without asserting that meekness is composed of no other ingredients, we think humility and love are amongst its chief. Imagine the case of a man who is all alive to the conviction that he is wholly unworthy the favour of his Maker; and that the blessing cannot be mentioned which he is entitled to claim. Not indeed that every believer is fraught as he ought to be with a conviction like this. But the feeling ought to be paramount, so far as meekness is made up of a sense of unworthiness; and he alone is a meek man to whom every day mercies wear the character of wonders. And inasmuch as the meek man possesses this consciousness, he may justly be said to inherit the earth. He traces a Father's hand; he reads a Father's tenderness in the daily allotments of food and clothing and habitation. The earth sends not up the blade of corn which seems not a wonder in his eye, because given to transgressors. The drop of water leaps not from the fountain which sparkles not with prodigy, because intended for the refreshment of those who have sinned against God. A ray of light falls on no human habitation which does not appear as a miracle, because illuminating the dwelling-place of the friendless and the prodigal. Thus the earth will be to the Christian a very different scene from what it is to others. Others possess the earth—the meek inherit the earth. Others move upon its provinces, gather in its productions, and delight in its riches, but they cannot survey it with the feelings of an heir. Glance at the second characteristic or ingredient into which we resolved the meekness of the Christian—earnest love for his fellow-men. And surely in proportion as a man acquires this love he may clearly be said to inherit the earth. In place of being broken into tribes and kindreds, each separated from the rest by its own interests and concerns, the millions of our race become as one vast household, every individual of which is a brother. What then? The spot cannot be found where the meek man being placed shall be quite a stranger. I say you cannot place him where there is no object of his love, none in whose welfare he has no interest. Wherever he journeys he may still be said to be at home. Thus the meek man possesses the earth; nay, rather, inherits the earth. He possesses it by family compact—by the claims and the rights of relationship; and the possession thus obtained is possession by heirship. Only then allow that the meek man must be animated with the love of all men, and you also allow that he turns the whole human population into one household, and that household his own. And if we have thus a home in the earth in its length and breadth, we contend it is fairly and literally made out that the meek man inherits the earth. And assuredly that must be a blessed thing; so that the promise of our text should animate us to the cultivation of Christian meekness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

**Vers. 12-15. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.**—*The plottings of the wicked against the good:*—That the wicked plot against the just is matter of history, and of everyday experience. They envy the moral character of the good, with the respect it wins and the influence it yields. They are also rebuked by the quiet dignity of the Christian character, and hence, through sheer hatred, seek to persecute and remove it out of their sight. I. **THE PLOTTINGS OF THE WICKED AGAINST THE GOOD ARE WRATHFUL.** "And gnasheth upon him," etc. The wicked show by their gestures the rage they indulge against, and injury they would inflict upon, the good if it were in their power. II. **THE PLOTTINGS OF THE WICKED AGAINST THE GOOD ARE CRUEL.** "The wicked have drawn out the sword." They have drawn the weapon out of the sheath and await the time to use it. III. **THE PLOTTINGS OF THE WICKED AGAINST THE GOOD ARE DETERMINED.** "And have bent their bow." They take steady aim that they may wound a vital part. And thus the wicked, in their plottings against the just, make use of all the instrumentalities they can command, exercise all the talents they possess, and are strong in their determination to achieve the end they contemplate. IV. **THE PLOTTINGS OF THE WICKED AGAINST THE GOOD ARE COWARDLY.** They attack the feeble who are too meek in spirit to suspect their mischief, or to defend themselves from it; they attack the poor who have not wherewith to protect themselves from the assaults of their imperious enemies.

Wicked men are generally cowardly. They have not the courage of their rage, or the valour of their determination. V. **THE PLOTTINGS OF THE WICKED AGAINST THE GOOD ARE SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.** The very weapon intended for the destruction of the good, under the mysterious but retributive arrangements of Divine providence, shall be employed in the defeat of the wicked. The wicked are often hung upon gallows built by themselves. Lessons:—1. It is foolish for the wicked to plot against the good. 2. Such plottings are intelligible to the good, being explained by the omniscience of the world to Christ. 3. Such plottings are not to be feared, but are to be outlived by trust in God. (*Joseph S. Ezell, M.A.*)

Vers. 16–20. **A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.**—*The folly of fretful envy.*—I. **THE GOOD IN COMPARATIVE POVERTY ARE BETTER OFF THAN THE WICKED WITH PLENTY.** “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” Better for two reasons. 1. His condition would be a more enjoyable one. He would have higher happiness. His happiness would spring from within, that of the other from without. The happiness of the one selfish, the other generous; the one decreasing, the other heightening. 2. His condition would be a more honourable one. The one is honoured for what he has, the other for what he is. The one is honoured only here by the depraved, the other is honoured yonder by angels and by God. II. **THE GOOD ARE DIVINELY SUPPORTED, BUT THE WICKED SHALL LOSE THEIR POWER.** “The arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous.” 1. The power of the wicked to execute their purpose is to be destroyed. They have often a great deal of power, the arm of literature, commerce, law, war, and with these they work out their iniquitous plans; but the “arms” are not imperishable. 2. The power of the good to prosecute their mission will be Divinely sustained. (1) The power to do good is Divine. (2) Divine power is indestructible. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” III. **THE GOOD SHALL HAVE A PERMANENT INHERITANCE, BUT RUIN IS THE DOOM OF THE WICKED.** “The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever.” What is the “inheritance” of the righteous? The Lord Himself. “The Lord is my portion.” 1. This “inheritance” will preclude all disappointment. “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.” Whatever comes, whatever the wrecks of life, and the riot of confusion, with this “inheritance” there will be calm courage. “I am persuaded that neither life nor death,” etc. 2. This “inheritance” will yield satisfaction under the most unfavourable circumstances. (*Homilist.*) **The righteous and his little, better than the wicked with his much.**—The little may be better than the much. This is Heaven’s arithmetic. Why is the little better? I. Because it is **HONESTLY GAINED.** Either the product of healthy labour, of commendable skill, or of lawful inheritance. II. Because it may be **SAFELY RETAINED.** Prayer and benevolence are a great preservative to wealth. III. Because it may be **TRULY ENJOYED.** IV. Because it will be **CAREFULLY SPENT.** V. Because it will be **BENEVOLENTLY USED.** The righteous gain by giving. A running stream inherits the most territory. VI. Because it will be **DIVINELY BLESSED.** Lessons:—1. To be satisfied with little. 2. To make little sufficient. 3. To use little well. (*Joseph S. Ezell, M.A.*) **The advantages of the virtuous for the enjoyment of external good.**—I. **A GOOD MAN HAS GREATER ENJOYMENT, PURER AND MORE SOLID SATISFACTION, FROM A LITTLE, THAN THE WICKED CAN HAVE FROM THE LARGEST FORTUNE.** 1. Vice produces a temper which is very unfavourable to our enjoyment. It destroys the constitution, and breaks the vigour of the soul. It subjects it to the most uneasy feelings and the most painful passions (*Isa. i. 5, 6*). The fiercest shocks of thunder, winds, and rains cannot produce more dreadful convulsions in the frame of nature, than those into which tumultuous, exorbitant, and jarring passions throw the soul: they ravage all its enjoyments. 2. On the other hand, virtue establishes a temper in the soul, which fits us for taking pleasure in whatever we possess. It dispels the black clouds which overcast the vicious heart, and intercept the comfort which might arise from outward things: they are scattered by its brightness; they fly away before it as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. A virtuous temper lays the mind open to every satisfaction that comes in its way, prepares it for embracing and enjoying it; and it renders the man so well disposed, so happy in himself, that almost every object throws some satisfaction in his way. II. **HIS ENJOYMENT IS MORE DURABLE.** 1. As bodily distemper, from small beginnings, increases till it prove mortal, as one disease neglected is the cause of many others; so the vices of the depraved heart daily acquire new

strength by indulgence; they propagate many more; they infect the temper and disorder the constitution with a growing multitude of tormenting passions; they root guilt, remorse, and terror deeper in the soul. Whatever good qualities he once possessed, they will be gradually choked by his spreading vices; they will wither and decay; his capacity of enjoyment will be blasted in the same proportion. The man who never thinks of rectifying the depravities of his temper, but goes on to indulge them without control, must at last become abandoned, and insusceptible of genuine satisfaction. 2. The enjoyment of the good man is in every respect the reverse. Like his practice, it is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His virtue does not merely secure the continuance of that relish which he has for true pleasure; it improves his relish in proportion as itself is, by careful practice, strengthened and refined. By daily progress in holiness, he will be more and more possessed of that heavenly serenity of soul, which, by giving him the full enjoyment of himself, prepares him for deriving high and solid satisfaction from every agreeable circumstance in his worldly condition.

III. BUT A STRONG OBJECTION SEEMS TO ARISE FROM EXPERIENCE: the wicked, it may be urged, have actually a greater, and the righteous a less degree of enjoyment than we have asserted. We admit the fact; if the wicked were so totally destitute of enjoyment as we have represented them to be, their life would be insupportable: but we maintain that, when this fact is examined, instead of weakening our argument, it will confirm it. We have hitherto supposed the character to be purely virtuous, or purely vicious, that by viewing virtue and vice separately, we might the better discover the genuine tendency of both: but every human character is mixed, composed of some virtues and some vices; and the actual enjoyment of every human creature is affected by each of the ingredients which enter into the composition. Every abatement to which the good man's enjoyment is liable in this mixed state, is to be placed to the account of vice: and whatever degree of enjoyment the world can convey to the wicked, is to be ascribed to their imperfect virtues.

1. If these things be so, need we be surprised that so few are really happy? Is it not rather surprising that so many find life tolerable? 2. Need we be concerned that outward things are distributed so promiscuously, or so unequally? It is in the power of every man, by the assistance of God's grace, to cultivate a virtuous and holy temper: and this is infinitely more important to his enjoyment than the gaudiest distinctions of external state. 3. Would we be truly happy? Let us be virtuous. It is not more our duty than it is our interest. (*A. Gerard, D.D.*) *How to make much of a little*:—1. See, in any poor cottage, where true devotion and honest industry abide, how far even very scant wages will go towards providing the real comforts of life. It is not only that Christian patience makes them content with a little, but somehow Christian prudence teaches them to make the most of that little, so that it seems to grow in their hands, and to reach further in the way of making them comfortable than any one would have thought possible.

2. Nor is it less surprising, on the other hand, to see how irreligion wears out and destroys, if not the riches themselves of worldly men, at least all the enjoyment and pleasure that might be looked for in them. How often do we hear of great fortunes dissipated unexpectedly, and nothing, people say, to show for it all!

3. This becomes still plainer when we come down to more particulars—to the things wherein people are supposed particularly to enjoy their wealth. "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith." Who would not rather be St. John in the wilderness, with the leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat locusts and wild honey, than such a wealthy king as Herod, "making a feast to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee"? 4. It is the same in the matter of health and strength. A saint on a sick-bed—Hezekiah turning his face to the wall and praying—shall do more, shall really exert more power to change the face of the world, than a mighty conqueror, such as Sennacherib, at the head of his army. 5. One chief supposed advantage of wealth is, that it enables men to choose their company, and to abound in all social enjoyment; but one sure friend that the righteous hath is worth all the companions of the ungodly. Elijah in the wilderness, with now and then a visit from an angel: did he not find that the remembrance of those rare moments cast a light over all his long, solitary hours, which quite prevented them from being tedious? Did he ever wish himself, think you, in Ahab's place, with his many friends and allies, and his seventy children? 6. Nay, and the same rule holds, not only in respect of outward things, but of knowledge also, and scholarship, and acquaintance even with divine matters. Thus a little drop of knowledge, touched by Divine grace,

may swell into a sea: as the wise son of Sirach describes God's dealings with himself: "I came out," he says, "as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden: I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed; and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea." Because he applied himself to his immediate and nearest duty with all his heart, God blessed him with large and high knowledge, beyond all the ungodly wisdom of the world. 7. Such is God's mercy on the one hand, and the perverseness of men on the other, that, even in respect of spiritual blessings also, the psalmist's saying holds true. A little measure of grace well employed, and received into a heart willing to be made righteous, is better—far better—than the highest spiritual privileges, when God, in His unsearchable judgments, has vouchsafed them to unworthy persons. Here is comfort for those who seem to be placed in less favourable circumstances than others; less within reach of the means of grace; farther from churches, or with rarer opportunities of receiving the Sacraments. I do not deny that their loss is great: yet our Lord not doubtfully gives us to understand that it may be made up, though they themselves know not how, by increased and most earnest prayers and endeavours on their part. They may be like the woman of Canaan, who, although she was in the place of the dogs, yet was allowed a portion of the children's bread, because of her great faith, her persevering and humble prayer. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*) *Gladness under constrained conditions*:—As I was writing these words there broke upon my ears the song of a canary bird hanging in the room overhead. Its thrilling notes were not a whit less joyous than those which I have often heard rained down from the infinite expanse of heaven by the little skylark of my native land. In spite of its cage that tiny warbler sings, and when its young mistress goes to speak to it, there is a flutter of joy in its wings as with ruffled neck and chattering gladness it leaps to bid her welcome. So let us accept our bonds, whether of poverty, or weakness, or duty, as the bird accepts its cage. You may cage the bird, but you cannot cage its song. No more can you confine or restrain the joy of the heart which, accepting its condition, sees God in it and greets Him from it. (*W. M. Taylor.*)

**Ver. 18. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.**—*The portion of the upright*:—I. THE PERSONS SPOKEN OF—the upright, a character equally rare and excellent. II. THE PERIOD—their days. These are known of God. He knows them kindly and graciously, and will make them all work together for good. How varied are their days: days of affliction, of danger, etc. But He knows them all. III. THE PORTION—their inheritance shall be for ever. So was not the inheritance of many of the angels in heaven; nor of Adam in Paradise; nor of the Jews in Canaan; nor of the man of this world. But the Christian inheritance is for ever. In the world we may have many losses, but they cannot affect our state. (*W. Jay.*)

**Vers. 21–26. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.**—*The superiority of the righteous to the wicked*:—I. IN RELATION TO SOCIETY. 1. The righteous man here is put in social contrast to the wicked, which "borroweth" and doth not pay. David means to say that the wicked are often in society needy and dishonest. 2. In contrast with this, look at the righteous, "The righteous showeth mercy and giveth." (1) He has the means of helping. Moral goodness is favourable to secular prosperity. As a rule the genuinely religious are not too indigent to render some help to their fellow-men. (2) He has always the disposition to help. "The righteous showeth mercy and giveth." The instinct of generous communication is the law of his life. Why should such a man, then, envy the wicked? II. IN RELATION TO GOD. 1. He blesses the righteous, but not the wicked. "Such as be blessed of Him." 2. He establishes the righteous, but not the wicked. "The steps of a good man," etc. As God has put every planet into its separate orbit, and each to move around the sun, so He has put every good man in his particular course of life, and on that course he pursues his way with a vigour and a wisdom derived from heaven. 3. He is pleased with the righteous, but not with the wicked. "He delighteth in his way." III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD. 1. They will be kept from utter destitution. "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down." Moral goodness, though highly favourable to secular prosperity, is not an infallible guarantee against reverses in fortune and adversity. Albeit, they are not "utterly cast

down." "The Lord upholdeth him with His hand." They may be persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. 2. Neither they nor their children shall be utterly neglected. "I have been young," etc. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 23. **The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way.**—*The ordered steps*:—That first step of your little child—what an event it is! Never again will single steps have such interest for you. And yet why not? In manhood, no less than in infancy, single steps are significant. You find it out sometimes in disagreeable ways. One step in the dark carries you off firm footing into an open trap, or down a bank. The first step down a wrong road is the beginning of troublesome, and possibly dangerous, wanderings. The first step to honour or fortune—how much meaning! I. **GOD ORDERS AND ESTABLISHES THE DETAILS OF HIS CHILDREN'S LIVES.** Details are of immense importance everywhere. Step by step is the law of all progress. God moves masses through details. A man is what the details of his life are. In the Bible we see God busied not alone with great things, but He is constantly dealing with details. He is explaining a servant's dream; He is providing for a little castaway babe in a bulrush basket. And so it was in the life of Christ. His work was full of detail, of small incidents of little duties daily done. The same thing appears in Christ's preaching. He tells men how to live; but He says nothing about great, far-reaching plans of life. His talk is rather of living by the day, and letting the morrow take thought for the things of itself. He comes to reveal God to us: but His speech is not about the God of vast designs and transcendent power; rather of one who paints each lily of the fields, and feeds the birds, and marks the sparrow's fall, and numbers the hairs of our head. Thus you see one law—the law of the steps—running through physical and moral nature alike. Gravitation and Providence observe the same principle. God regulates the mass through the particles; society, through the individual; the individual, through the details of his life. II. **AND THERE IS DESIGN AND PLAN IN ALL THOUGH WE OFTEN FAIL TO PERCEIVE THIS.** Our little daily duties appear to have so slight relation to each other. But as one illustration that the truth is other than it seems, look at the familiar history of the life of Joseph. The steps of a good man, then, are ordered. He does not walk at random. And really you and I, in our measure, are familiar with the same fact, and act it out. You see in a son of yours promise of intellectual and moral power; and you set yourself to shape that boy's career, and you do shape it, and that by attending to its successive steps. Is there, then, anything strange in our heavenly Father's ordering the steps of His children? For a free will may choose to obey another will. If God has prepared tracks for my life, surely my very freedom of choice empowers me to keep to those tracks: and, to the obedient, loving soul, it is an immense comfort and relief to know that his life moves on prepared lines. I sat one evening in a window looking out on Charing Cross railway-station, with its trains arriving, and departing every few minutes, and its cross-tides of thronging people. A train stood on the track, and the bell rang for starting. In front, through the great archways, I looked out into the misty night. A few stray gleams of light revealed a labyrinth of rails, curving and crossing: above was a signal-stand—a great hieroglyph of green, red, and white lights, shifting every moment; and into this darkness and confusion the engine moved. What was it that made that engineer so quiet and confident? Why was he not disturbed and anxious at the chaos of rails and lights and the thick night beyond? Simply because everything was laid down for him. He had only to obey the signals, and drive his engine: the track was laid. Other minds had the care and responsibility of the switches and signal-lights: he had only to go forward, and to stop when bidden. "I do not like the picture," some one will perhaps say. "It leaves me little to say about my life." Well, change the picture if you will. Let the engineer go forth from the station on an engine not fitted to a track. Let him move out into the night, in the consciousness of independence and free choice, to avoid collision and wreck as he can. Have you bettered the matter any? Our own way means ruin; God's way is, and alone is, salvation. III. **GOD IS PLEASED WITH HIM WHO LETS HIS STEPS BE ORDERED.** Literally the words read, "From Jehovah is it that a man's steps are established, so that He hath pleasure in his way. We do God a great wrong when we picture Him as a creditor whose interest in his debtors begins and ends with their paying their debts. God merges the relation of debtor and creditor in that of father and child. It is a very small part of your interest in your child, that he should repay you for your care of him. In fact,

payment is impossible. On the contrary, everything the child does or says is interesting to you because he is your child. Now, possibly, we find it hard to transfer just that feeling to God; and yet that is the true view of his feeling towards His children. But we find it difficult to believe, though we would like to, that we are God's children. We are so faulty and wrong: it seems a cruel satire to tell me that the Lord delighteth in my way. Here, then, the third truth of the text comes in. IV. INFIRMITY IS RECOGNIZED AS AN ELEMENT OF THE GOOD MAN'S WALK. "Though he fall"—then it is looked upon as more than possible that he may fall. We may go back to the picture of the babe's first walk. There is none which better suits the case. You do not despise that baby's attempts at walking, because he falls over now and then. You would rather have him fall a hundred times—yes, and hurt himself too—than not have him walk at all. Let us face the fact squarely. There is falling along the path by which God orders a man's steps. It is not that God ordains sin. He does not. But the path which God ordains for a good man lies through this world: and sin is in the world, no matter why or how; and a good man's walk with God consists very largely in a fight with sin. What God pledges is not that he shall walk to heaven a perfect, sinless man all the way. The psalmist prays, "Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me"; and, when we turn from the psalmist to Paul, we find the answer to that prayer: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The promise is for victory in the fight, but not for escape from the fight. Establishment does not exclude conflict or fall. One has said of David after his moral fall, "He is not what he was before, but he is far nobler and greater than many a just man who never fell and never repented. Let us beware of thinking repentance a sentiment of a lower grade, or degrading to the man who drops its bitter tears. There is something heroic in the man who looks up to God's ideal of manhood far, far above him, and at himself, lamed and wounded by his fall, and says, "By God's grace I will mount to it." Learn then—1. If God has ordained a way for men to walk in, it is the height of folly to walk in any other way. 2. If God, as we have seen, orders our ways step by step, it becomes us to take heed to the details of our lives. 3. And ought we not to get great comfort out of this Divine ordering of each step? When a traveller in the Alps is ascending an ice-slope where he has to cut steps as he mounts, he thinks of little besides the step he is at that moment cutting. He has a point to reach, a space to traverse; but all that is lost sight of in the danger and difficulty which wait on every step. He knows he will escape destruction only as each step shall be rightly cut, and his foot firmly planted each time. It is a good deal so in this life. It is not a safe journey by any means; but there is this assurance for a child of God who walks it, that each step shall be sure if he only commits his way unto the Lord. The separate steps! Sometimes each one seems to sink into a quagmire, or to strike a stone. It is hard to walk on in strong faith that they are ordered by the Lord. But they are so. Remember this, and that if He be for me, who can be against me? (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The Lord's ordering of a good man's steps*:—I. **THE LIFE OF A GOOD MAN IS DIVINELY PLANNED.** 1. If you will examine this psalm, you will have no difficulty in ascertaining what the writer means by a good man. "He trusts in the Lord and does good; he delights himself also in the Lord; commits his way unto the Lord; trusts also in Him; rests in the Lord; and waits patiently for Him." 2. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Many persons never think of this; some deny it altogether; and perhaps most of us often forget it, and thus lose the comfort of it (*Prov. xvi. 9; xx. 24*). (1) This plan is individual. There is not an item in our daily life which is not comprehended. Our joys, our sorrows, our associates, our connections, our wanderings, our acts, our thoughts; my life, your life, is Divinely ordered. (2) It is special as it is comprehensive. The good man is Divinely directed in his everyday procedure, in his going out and coming in, his lying down and rising up, his successes and failures, his joys and sorrows, his trials and triumphs, his birth and death. (3) It is benevolent. God overrules all agents and all events for the well-being of His people. God's plan is great in its conception, great in the Divine skill by which it is shaped and worked out; above all, great in the momentous issues it prepares. But remember it is good as it is great. What a thought is this for us to cherish! What instigations does it add to send us onward in everything that constitutes our excellence! II. **THE LIFE OF A GOOD MAN IS DIVINELY APPROVED.** "He delighteth in his way." This is understood by some to mean that the good man delights in



the way of the Lord. I think the words mean that the Lord delights in the way of the good man. The good man delights himself in the Lord, and the Lord delights in him. 1. He delighteth in his way, because it is formed and fashioned according to the will of God, and is directed by His own Spirit. 2. He delighteth in his way, because it manifests His glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God." But more of God and His glory may be seen in the life of a good man than can be seen in the material universe. You see in him all that can be seen in the material creation, but you see in him what cannot be seen in it; and, moreover, you see more clearly what can. III. THE LIFE OF A GOOD MAN IS DIVINELY PROTECTED. 1. The possibility implied. "Though he fall." A good man, in this world of changes and reverse, may get prostrated by misfortune and distress; he may sink very low as to worldly circumstances; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything, or, like Joseph, put in prison. In this life disasters are to be expected, and it forms no part of God's plan to prevent them. They are intended for the benefit of the good man; they are the refiner's fire. 2. The truth expressed. "He shall not be utterly cast down." He may fall; he may be cast down; but he shall not be prostrated wholly, not be thrown down for ever. The good man must expect to suffer, but not perish (vers 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20). 3. The reason. "The Lord upholdeth his hand," or, "is holding him up by his hand," or, "upholdeth him with His hand." "Thou hast holden me by my right hand." God not only sustains the good man in particular emergencies, but He is his constant and habitual upholder (vers. 12, 18, 21). He has always a hold on his hand. He never lets it go. (*P. Griffiths.*) *Human evolution: from the involution of the Divine Spirit*:—A man's way is strictly the original Divine-human life more and more rooting and opening itself in him: the glory of God shed abroad in the inner world of his soul, as the solar glory is shed abroad in the earth, developing, transfiguring, and preparing him for his ascension, "God delighteth in the way;" because it is love's way, and unspeakably delightful. It is life's way to man's completeness and complete blessedness; and grander than any man can think or imagine. It is evolution and evolution, not from non-intelligent matter, but from the living incorruptible substance in which God is involved as the working power. The steps which the Infinite Father has ordered for His sons and daughters are a series of surprises. Love delights to surpass expectation, and to have greater and greater surprises in reserve. 1. The whole round of nature is a ceaseless wonder, and ceaselessly changing its aspect. It feasts our affections, gratifies our love of the beautiful, exhilarates and enlarges the mind, cultivates the imagination, and is an endless source of poetic symbolism and illustration. It lives and breathes; and therefore demonstrates the nearness of God. It is never old, for it renews itself, and grows before our eyes. There are always untrodden districts, and unvisited worlds awaiting our opportunity. Then God's sons and daughters are themselves all that nature is, and much more. They are the crown of nature: they are nature, plus divinity. 2. Another beautiful surprise comes within the scope of our earthly existence: the home and family-surprise. New spirits from God actually arrive: they come secretly into our very blood, and clothe themselves with our nature; they come to stay with us and grow up in our homes. Their vivacity and novelty add a wonderful charm and enlargement to our life. 3. The stealing on of nature's great eclipse and midnight is the dawn of God's new life—full morning for the inner man. Death is new birth; when the sweetest surprise of all breaks into view. Nature's children die; but God's never. His children live, and breathe, and hold their being in the bosom of His Almighty Livingness. The way of God is from the first a "living way." "Thou wilt show me the path of life;" and His path of life becomes more and more living; and most living, in, and through nature's death. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The ascent from the cold gloom of the valley is swift, for the guardian angels meet us there, and God is in them. (*John Pulsford, D.D.*) *Special providence*:—God exercises a special control over His chosen people. I. GOD HAS A SPECIAL DESIGN IN THEIR PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT. 1. He has a plan for the life of each one (Isa. xxx. 21). 2. He knows the temperament peculiar to each one (Ps. cxxxix. 3). 3. He suits His providence to the temperament of each one so as to accomplish His design (Matt. xii. 20; Eph. i. 5, 6). II. GOD EMPLOYS MEANS TO WORK OUT HIS DESIGNS. Sin is to be mortified and expelled, whilst character is to be refined and perfected. For this purpose trials and temptations, persecutions and afflictions, calamities and bereavements, are apportioned to each. 1. These are permissive (Job i. 12).

2. They are decreative (Gen. xxii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 3-9). 3. They are afflictive and corrective (Ps. cxix. 67, 71; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Heb. xii. 6-11). III. THE NATURE OF THESE PROVIDENCES. 1. They are minute and exact (Matt. x. 30). 2. They relate to food and raiment (Ps. xxxvii. 25; Matt. vi. 25-34). 3. They extend to the whole of life (Job xiv. 6; Ps. xxxvii. 28; cxxxix. 14-16). IV. APPLICATION. 1. Let us trust God more implicitly in all the events of life. 2. Let us take comfort from this doctrine. "All things work together for good" (Rom. viii. 28); they do so now. Whatever else may fail us, God will not (Ps. xcvi. 1). (L. O. Thompson.)

Ver. 24. **The Lord upholdeth him with His hand.**—*Hand in hand with God*:—The force of this passage is somewhat lost by the rendering of it here. What David says literally is this, Jehovah is holding his hand. "His hand" is the man's hand—not God's hand. Read it thus, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for Jehovah is holding his hand"—that is what David means. The mental image in this text is just this. A child has to tread a certain path. That child is weak and timid—he may be reduced by sickness—yet he has to tread a certain path. His father knows that he is weak and timid—he goes with him, and takes his hand. That is the image. The reality is this. Life is that path—the distance between our cradle and our tomb—between the hour of our birth and the hour of our death. The man of God is that child. How real God was to David. One looks sometimes for the reason of this—and I think while it is impossible entirely to account for it, that we must attach some importance to such circumstances as these. Mark David's early piety. He began to trust that God while he was yet in his teens. The advantage of beginning early no words can express. Hence David had acquired the habit of trust in God. I think, also, we must attach some importance to David's early sorrows. There is one lesson which can be only learnt by affliction—and that is, to use the things of earth without abusing them. Sorrow throws the man upon God, and obliges him, if he have but a germ of religious life in his nature, to get his rest, and his peace, and his blessedness from God. Then his great sensitiveness was, moreover, brought completely under the power of his religious ideas and his religious principles. That comes out marvellously in the 22nd Psalm: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me?" Now, the man who could write that must have lived very near to God. But who is he that lives in such a habit of fellowship with God, that if that fellowship be interrupted—if God in the course of a day say less to the man than He has been accustomed to say, would feel such anguish and grief about it as this cry—"My God, my God, why," etc., indicate? And who would do it on a throne? God was a reality to David's soul: hence he could write such things as these. He could say with reference to every man trusting in God, and delighting in God, "Jehovah is holding his hand." David saw it: it was a matter of constant observation to him. Many others did not see it. But he did. Yes, the great Jehovah condescends thus towards us. Thus it is with God. There is real contact. "Jehovah is holding his hand." And there is real help—not merely contact. Not the displacement of our effort, or substitution for it, but help. The child walks, is not carried, but its hand is held. So is it with God. He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves. And yet we have deep sense all the while of our own personal weakness. We know that our strength is from God. Now, Jesus Christ has come to us fallen creatures, whose hands have parted from God's hand, to put our hand again into the grasp of the Almighty Father. (S. Martin.) *The Divine hand*:—I. IT IS A STRONG HAND. It balances all worlds, steadies the swinging universe, ordains the march of law, and the succession of events. II. IT IS A REDEEMING HAND. It alone wrought salvation. III. IT IS A TENDER HAND. It can crush. But when did it ever break the reed? (*The Study*.)

Ver. 25. **I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.**—*The voice of age to youth*:—Between youth and age, in one sense, there is a great gulf fixed. It is impossible that there should be an entire intelligence on the one side; it is rare to find an entire sympathy on the other. And yet surely the old ought to have something to say to the young. Curiosity alone would bid them to find out what they can about that undiscovered country from which a voice comes to them, saying, "When you reach it, you will find" this and this—its feeling, its experience, its memory, its regrets, and its aspirations.

If, in addition to this, anything could be said as to the best way of making the journey—anything as to the secret of "a good old age," what has to be done, and what has to be avoided in the start; what companions would be congenial, and what insufferable, as the long future unfolds itself and the terminus is at last discernible in the distance—there would be no lack of listeners to such discourse. If in one sense there is a wide and deep chasm between youth and age, in another there is no break and no disruption at all between the two. We are all very ready to suppose that we shall have some notice, that we shall not pass quite unconsciously from young men into old. The very putting of the thought into words shows its futility. It is not so; one age of life shades off into another. Each particular day is of the same piece and colour with its yesterday and its to-morrow. The only notice given comes too late. The continuity is never snapped in twain; the tenor of the life is one and but one. "The child is father of the man," and the man of the old man, and the old man of the everlasting being who lifts up the eyes for bliss or woe in Hades. No sin dies a natural death; it cannot be conquered without a battle. It can be a battle in which, in some sense, Satan casts out Satan, that is when pride, or ambition, or fear of the world, or dread of consequences, prevails against some particular evil tendency, and so to say, the body of sin cuts off from itself one member. Such is the history of many reforms and many amendments. Heaven keeps no register of them. They are neither here nor there as to the everlasting life of the man. This is one battle. Many men never fight even this battle. Many go on in their sins weakly, helplessly, till they are found out far on, or till they die in them, late or early, and go hence to be no more seen. But there is another battle with sin quite different in history and character, in course and end from this. This is when a man knowing that there is no gulf fixed by age or the lapse of time between him and sinning, knowing that no man sleeps off, or sleeping loses or outlives his sin, and knowing that he must not risk eternity in the chance of truth, whether taught by experience or taught by revelation, turning out after all a lie, tries upon himself the Gospel remedy, watches and prays, prays and watches, on the faith of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and with many failures and many defeats, yet withstands and is found standing, conquering, one by one, the sins of youth and the sins of age, till he may cast his crown before the Throne, and ascribe his salvation to God and the Lamb. To recommend this course, to press its reasonableness, its necessity, its urgency upon such as have ears to hear, this is why age speaks to youth, and this is what it is saying: "Keep innocence, and take heed unto the thing that is right," etc. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Testimony from an aged saint*:—The aged Christian is able, from his own experience, to testify to the protecting care of a Divine Father's love. The difference between the testimony of an old man and a very young man is the difference between knowledge and supposition, between fact and surmise; it is the difference between the words of a veteran who carries the scars, the sword-cuts, and the bullet-wounds of many battlefields, and the words of the ruddy-faced youth who has not yet won his shoulder-straps.

**Ver. 27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.—Man's grand concern:**—I. **ESCHEWING EVIL AND DOING GOOD.** "Depart from evil and do good." Evil and good are correlative and coextensive terms. They are antagonistic principles, they are both in the world, and both incessantly working. Both are incarnate. Good in its perfect form is in Christ. "Depart from evil." You are in it, as in a poisonous atmosphere, as in a foul disease, as in a miserable captivity; struggle to get out of it, leave the moral district, and strive after a more salubrious air. "Do good." Good is a practical thing, not a thing for mere poetry or discussion, but a thing for practice. What is it to do good? Not the performance of any particular thing, for we have a thousand things to accomplish, but to do everything from a good motive—supreme love to God. II. **SPEAKING WISDOM AND JUDGMENT.** "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment." It is the characteristic of a righteous man that his speech is wise and just. He allows "no corrupt communication to proceed out of his mouth." Man's speech has always a moral quality, it is always wise or foolish, just or unjust, good or bad. III. **RECTITUDE IN HEART AND LIFE.** "The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide." It is one thing to have the law of his God in the book or the brain, and another thing to have it in the heart; to have it in the heart implies that it is cherished with love and

obeyed with loyalty. It is in the heart as the moral monarch, holding empire over all the faculties of being and activities of life. Being in the heart, it directs the life. "None of his steps" (or "goings") "shall slide." There will be an unswerving adherence to the path of right. IV. WAITING ON THE LORD AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS. "Wait on the Lord and keep His way." 1. Waiting on the Lord implies (1) Realization of His presence; (2) Expectation of His commands, and (3) Readiness to obey. V. THE SPECIAL FAVOUR OF HEAVEN. 1. The special guardianship of God. "The Lord loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints, they are preserved for ever." 2. Deliverance from the power of the wicked. "The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged." The truth of this is realized in the experience of all good men after death. 3. Exaltation and long life. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 28. The Lord forsaketh not His saints: they are preserved for ever.—*Secure property*:—A religion of contingencies and uncertainties deserve not the name of Christianity, and it is perfectly a misnomer to call it Christianity. I. THE PROPERTY OF JEHOVAH IS HIS SAINTS. Not the angels, the heavens, or the earth, but His saints. I mean real, not hypocritical saints. Let me describe them a little. 1. They were once vile and full of sin: but they are transformed and they know it. They are created anew in Christ. 2. Moreover, they are consecrated, or they could not be saints, and God claims such as His own. 3. They have been eternally set apart as such: and for God Himself, as His sons, His servants, and His especial treasure. You must be a son before you can be a servant of God. 4. And they are manifestly God's saints both in creed and in conduct. II. THE LORD'S UNCHANGING LOVE FOR THEM. "He forsaketh not His saints." III. THE TRIUMPHS OF HIS GRACE IN THEM. "They are preserved for ever." (*Joseph Irons.*)

Ver. 31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.—*The law of God in the heart*:—I. THE INWARD PRINCIPLE WHICH ACTUATES A GOOD MAN. 1. An acquaintance with the law, considered as the standard of holiness, as the rule of action. 2. An habitual reference to God's mind and will. 3. A deep sense of the obligation of the law of God, accompanied with a sincere resolution of implicit and unreserved obedience. 4. A love to the law of God after "the inner man." 5. In a good man this attachment to the law of God, and to the rules of duty, is progressive, and, with every accession of religious experience, becomes more vigorous and confirmed. II. ITS EFFECTS ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. "None of his steps shall slide." His steps shall not fatally slide; he shall maintain a uniform and consistent deportment. 1. The violence of temptation shall not overpower him. 2. The suddenness of it shall not surprise him. 3. The deceitfulness of it shall not seduce him. 4. The example of the multitude shall not prevail. (*Robert Hall, M.A.*) *The Divine law in the heart*:—I. THERE IS A DIVINE LAW FOR THE REGULATION OF MANKIND. 1. Its source is love. 2. Its requirement is love. II. THIS DIVINE LAW SHOULD BECOME THE RULING POWER WITHIN MEN. 1. The law of peace. 2. The law of life. 3. The law of liberty. III. THIS DIVINE LAW, AS A RULING POWER WITHIN MEN, IS A GUARANTEE AGAINST ERRORS. "None of his steps shall slide." 1. This law of love will guard him from theological errors. A God-loving heart is the best interpreter of Scripture. 2. This law of love will guard him from moral errors. He who loves God supremely will delight in doing His will. (*Homilist.*) *The Divine law in the heart*:—1. One marked characteristic of this is that it inspires him with the power of an unlimited ideal. A high ideal is the spring of social progress and public enterprise. Who can calculate the soul's capabilities, and the mighty sweep of its orbit? It sees in Christ the highest example of excellence; and it goes on becoming more and more like Him, without ever arriving at a point beyond which it cannot pass. The man under the influence of this ideal is the truly practical man, his course of conduct being according to the laws of his being and adapted to the desired end. Christ is formed in him the hope of glory. 2. This develops the individuality of a man. Sensualism destroys individuality. The drunkard, in more senses than one, throws himself away. He unmans himself. But the man described in the text acts under a constant sense of responsibility. He feels that he must act himself and must stand or fall for himself. He knows that an act can only be performed by an individual, and that he must obey the law himself, or there will be no obedience so far as he is concerned. 3. The life of such a man is positive. He does not try

to see how near he can go to the edge of the precipice of wrong without falling over. But he goes on. He has a filial love that inclines him in a positive way to his heavenly Father. 4. Harmony of thought and word. The words are the direct expressions of the thoughts, because these are vivified by the heart's warm emotion. The law in the life is not a mere matter of memory. Paul truly says: "The law of the spirit of life hath saved me from the law of sin and death." The heart in an important sense in the man—it is the mainspring of action, and gives not only efficiency, but harmony. (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*) *Slippery places* (with Ps. lxxiii. 18; xciv. 18):—The slipping or sliding of the foot is used in the Bible as an emblem, chiefly, of three dangers. I. THE DANGER OF FALLING INTO SIN THROUGH TEMPTATION. If once you fall into the sin, you may, doubtless, rise again; but ah! you may rise sadly bruised, and perchance you may carry the mark of the bruise all your days! Even though we slip, it is well for us if we do not fall. But it is better still not even to slip, if we can help it. The spirit and the habits of godliness will lessen for us the dangers of temptation. II. THE DANGER OF FALLING INTO RUIN THROUGH SIN (Ps. lxxiii. 18). God has many methods of dealing with sinners. Sometimes He appeals to them by His "goodness"; at other times by His "severity." But if the sinner will not listen, then God lets the man have his own way—for a time! Oh, terrible punishment! III. THE DANGER OF FALLING INTO UNBELIEF THROUGH ADVERSITY (Ps. xciv. 18). There are those who, when they come into these dark and troublous experiences, and their foot is slipping into unbelief, will not lay hold of the supporting arm of God; they nurse a morbid gloom. Is it not enough to lose earthly wealth, without losing also, through our unbelief, the heavenly treasure? Is it not enough to lose by death the conscious companionship of some dear friend, without losing also, through our unbelief, the conscious friendship of Him who is the best of all friends? Let us, then, whenever we come into the slippery places of adversity, seek to grasp by faith the Cross of Calvary, that the mercy of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, may "hold us up." (*T. C. Finlayson.*)

Vers. 32, 33. **The wicked watcheth the righteous, and waiteth to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.**—*The foes of the righteous and how to escape them.*—We have seen a dog run after a bird when it was upon the ground, and nearly catch it; but, as soon as it mounted into its native element, all the dog could do was to look and bark. Christian, bird of Paradise, if thou settle upon earthly things, the great hell dog will stand some chance of injuring thee; but if thou keep in the heavenlies thou art safe. (*W. Luff.*)

Ver. 34. **Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.**—*A twofold admonition and promise.* I. THE ADMONITION. 1. Wait on the Lord. Do you thus wait? Now, in the present time, and at all times? 2. Keep His way. This is beautifully connected with the former. Wait—and work. Wait—and walk. Get grace—and exercise it. II. THE PROMISE. 1. "He shall exalt thee to inherit the land." God is the source of all elevation and honour. 2. "When the wicked are cut off, thou," etc. And they will be cut off from all they enjoy here, and from all hope hereafter. And as the saint will see the destruction of the sinner, so the sinner will see the salvation of the righteous, and not partake of it. This must be a source to him of the keenest anguish, for it might have been his own. (*W. Jay.*) *Obedience the remedy for religious perplexity.*—To some persons it may sound strange to speak of difficulties in religion, for they find none at all. But this arises, in many cases, from ignorance of religion itself. They observe forms, but their heart is not in the work. But when they are awakened, and earnestly seek the right way, then, from time to time, they are troubled with doubts and misgivings, and oppressed with gloom. To all those who are perplexed, one precept must be given—obey. It is obedience which brings a man into the right path; it is obedience keeps him there and strengthens him in it. Under all circumstances, whatever be the cause of his distress—obey. Apply this exhortation to those who have but lately taken up the subject of religion at all. Every science has its difficulties at first; why, then, should the science of living well be without them? And others are impatient with themselves, forgetting that a Christian spirit is the growth of time, and that we cannot force it upon our minds, however desirable and necessary it may be to possess it; that by giving

utterance to religious sentiments we do not become religious—rather the reverse; whereas if we strove to obey God's will in all things, we actually should be gradually training our hearts into the fulness of a Christian spirit. But, not understanding this, men are led to speak much upon sacred subjects, in the hope of its making them better: and they measure their advance in faith and holiness, not by their power of obeying God in practice, but by the warmth and energy of their religious feelings. And then, when these fail, and when, as sometimes is the case, their old sins revive, they are discouraged, and tempted to despair. But let them "wait on the Lord," this is the rule; "keep His way," this is the manner of waiting. Go about your duty; mind little things as well as great. Do not pause, and say, "I am as I was; day after day passes, and still no light"; go on. (J. H. Newman.)

Vers. 35-37. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not.—*The two characters:*—The word "perfect" in the Old Testament is generally used in the same sense as the word "godly" in the New. This "perfect" man is he "who feareth God and escheweth evil." His perfection is that of an earthly saint, not that of a heavenly saint. The "wicked" of the text are the same as the "evildoers," "the workers of iniquity," and the "ungodly" of the preceding verses. There is no need to trace out the character of these people, for do they not work it out in the sight of all in their ungodly conversation and conduct? And yet, forsooth, they dream of heaven. But what sort of a heaven? I. **THE WICKED AS SET FORTH IN THE TEXT.** 1. He is strong in health—"like a green bay-tree." 2. In riches. His fields have cropped heavily; he has much goods laid up for many years. Pharaoh-like, he defies all authority, and contemptuously asks, "Who is the Lord?" 3. In pride and selfishness. Haman is a correct representation of this class; and Nebuchadnezzar. 4. "Spreading himself out"—ostentatious, pompous, showy. What a contrast with the life of Christ, or with the idea of the Bible concerning the celestial state. 5. "Till he pass away." He disappears in darkness. "The name of the wicked shall rot." II. **THE PERFECT, THE UPRIGHT MAN.** 1. Mark him in the virtuousness of his life. 2. In his patience under trials. 3. In the secret comfort he enjoys. He has strong consolations. Where? The natural man cannot understand it. 4. In his departure from this life. Oh yes, mark him, behold him, follow him with the eye; he is drawing towards the close, it is true, but he will not be lost; it is growing light—lighter the deeper he goes. "Christ shall give thee light." "The end of that man is peace." 5. "Mark the perfect, behold the upright" once more—to see him entering on his eternal state. If the religion of the Bible lead to and produce such an end, is it not worth our while to seek it? (Anon.) *The wicked in three aspects:*—I. **AS FAVOURED WITH GREAT SECULAR PROSPERITY.** 1. Material nature, from which man draws all his secular good, pays no regard to moral character. 2. Greed for gain is one of the strongest passions in the heart of the wicked. 3. The efforts of the wicked are not restricted by moral considerations. II. **AS SWIFT UNEXPECTEDLY FROM THE EARTH.** 1. Though he appeared, the last time he was seen, strong, he is gone. 2. Though he appeared the most important object in the scene, he is gone. III. **AS STANDING IN STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE RIGHTEOUS** (vers. 37-40). 1. In relation to character. The good are in these verses called "perfect," "upright," "righteous." All these terms stand for the same thing—moral excellence. The wicked are spoken of as "transgressors": they outrage the everlasting principles of virtue, truth, and happiness; they are violators of the moral laws of the universe. 2. In relation to their end. Tholuck renders this sentence, "It shall go well with such a man." Peace is evermore the end of a good man—peace of conscience, peace with God, peace that passeth all understanding. What said Luther in dying? "God is the Lord by whom we escape death." What said Baxter? "I have pain, there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace, peace." 3. In relation to God. He is the destroyer of the wicked. (Homilist.) *Why wicked men are spared:*—I. **THAT THE LONG-SUFFERING AND GOODNESS OF GOD MAY LEAD THEM TO REPENTANCE.** The avenues to the heart are accessible in different persons by different ways. While some are naturally led to thought and reflection, by the fear of danger, or the sufferings of distress, others are more sensibly affected by instances of kindness and benevolence. Where there is a strong sensibility, and a sufficient generosity of natural disposition, the blessings of prosperity will be even more effectual than the arrows of adversity to

awaken men to the consideration of their ways, to lead them by the pleasing ties of gratitude, to the most affectionate love of God, to the most sincere respect for religion and virtue. II. **FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WITH WHOM THEY ARE CONNECTED IN SOCIETY.** 1. Perhaps this wicked man is the head of a numerous family, and you cannot inflict on him the penalty he deserves, without at the same time entailing misery on his wife, his children, and, probably, a great number of dependants, all of whom may be entirely innocent of the crimes he has committed. 2. Suppose a wicked man to be placed in a public station, a station for which, perhaps, you will imagine he is very unfit, as his bad example, when his influence is thus extended, may be still more contagious in corrupting the morals of others; yet, notwithstanding of this circumstance, which is in itself of great weight, he may still be possessed of several good qualities, which enable him, with superior advantage, to discharge the duties of the distinguished office; he may, perhaps, be possessed of great talents, or great industry, which render him more useful upon the whole, in that particular situation, than another man of more virtue, but of less ability. III. **THAT THEY MAY BE THE MEANS OF ADMINISTERING REBUKE AND CHASTISEMENT TO OTHERS,** who, perhaps, are not so wicked as themselves, but who probably are not sufficiently sensible of the advantages they enjoy, or who do not improve these advantages in all respects as they ought. (*W. Shiels.*)

Ver. 37. **Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.**—*The perfect man*.—I. **THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN.** 1. It cannot imply positive perfection—that is impossible. True, there is the seed of all grace in the heart of every child of God, and it is an incorruptible seed, but it has to grow, and this takes long time, and, meanwhile, imperfection is often and sadly manifest. The cases, referred to in parallel passages, of Noah and Job, prove this. See also Asa, 2 Chron. xv. 2. The child of God is perfect (1) In Christ. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them," etc. And (2) Because he is sincere. He is "upright," sincere in all his dealings, and sincerity is the reality of all other graces. II. **THE END OF SUCH A MAN**—"peace." His present condition is blessed, and the end—however chequered the way—is peace. III. **THE CALL GIVEN.** "Mark the perfect man," behold him. He is well worth looking at. You will not have many to mark. They are a blessing wherever they are. He is a trophy of the Redeemer's blood, a monument of God's sovereign grace and mercy. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The peaceful death of the righteous man*.—If we were about to enter upon a journey to a remote part of the earth, we should consider what was necessary for an undertaking of such importance, as to clothing and other commodities, and make provision accordingly. It were well for us to act upon the same principle, and in the same manner, with respect to the matters which concern the soul, and our journey to an eternal world. "What do I need for this journey? what do I need for that eternal state, to which I am advancing with rapidity? I need an interest in Divine love; to have God reconciled to me, and myself reconciled to God. Our text tells of one who had these things. I. **HIS CHARACTER.** He is described as "perfect." This word must be taken in a limited sense, as no man on earth is "perfect." Neither in body, nor in soul. II. **HIS END**—peace. He dies in peace: with God; in his mind and animated with bright hope. III. **THE DUTY**—we are to "mark," etc. 1. Observe him. 2. Lament over his departure. 3. Imitate him. (*A. Fletcher, M.A.*) *Providence*.—This psalm has been called a sermon on this theme. I. **THE CHARACTER PLACED BEFORE US**—the perfect, upright man. But are we not all sinful? Yes, but grace creates us anew. The infant is a perfect child, though far removed from the strength, stature and intelligence of a man. But the beginning of the perfect life is then. And so in regard to the life of grace. 1. It is a perfection of sincerity, as opposed to all dissimulation and hypocrisy. 2. Of completeness in reference to the whole will of God. 3. It denotes a firmness in which temptations make no impression. For God will not leave him to himself. 4. It is descriptive of those who have made great proficiency and eminent attainments in religion. So the word "perfect" is often used. Let us strive after this. II. **THE END OF SUCH A MAN**—peace. But he has not to wait till the end ere he experiences peace. He has it now, when he heartily believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is no peace to the wicked," but to him who has dropped his rebellion, and submitted himself to God, there is given peace. His is the peace of forgiveness and of sanctification. Sometimes disease and pain and weakness deprive the believer at the last of the comfort of the promises of God. But though, from these causes, their minds may be

darkened, yet do they as certainly die in the Lord as if they had departed amidst the greatest triumphs of faith. And very often it is amid such triumphs that they are permitted to depart. III. **THE IMPROVEMENT** we are to make of this subject. We are to "mark the perfect," etc. 1. He may be easily singled out and separated from the crowd. We are at a loss to know to what class some persons belong; but a Christian of eminent piety is a living epistle of Christ, to be seen and read of all men. Behold his "patient continuance in well doing," his humility, his piety. 2. Mark him, that you may know how to be like him. 3. How to obtain the same happy end of life. (*T. Craig.*) *Peace at the last*:—Like boats or other objects borne down on a mighty river, unable to stop in their course, unable to return upon it,—we, too, are gliding on with the race of a stream, and will in a short period arrive at the point of its disemboguing into the vast ocean of eternity. Not only is death inevitable, but it is usually a most appalling event. One element of good there is, with which we may mitigate the cup we have to drink; and that element is—peace of mind. I. One leading and essential element of peace is AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE TERMS OF THE NEW COVENANT, BY FAITH IN THE ATONING BLOOD OF CHRIST. We are all too far gone from original righteousness, as well by nature as by practice, to expect salvation, or to rely upon a peace, whether in life or in death, which is independent of the merits of the Redeemer. Yet, though this be the foundation of the Christian's hope, though peace be preached through Jesus Christ, it is by no means derogatory to that eternal truth to affirm, that the faith which embraces his atonement must evince by holiness its genuineness and its life. II. Among these ingredients of peace in the latter end of life, a man ought to be supported by A CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS HAVING MADE SOME PROVISION FOR THOSE WHO ARE TO COME AFTER HIM, and who would otherwise suffer, in a temporal sense, by his departure (1 Tim. v. 8). III. Another material ingredient in that mental peace to which we look forward in our latter end, must consist in THE SATISFACTORY REFLECTION ON OUR HAVING LIVED TO SOME PURPOSE IN THE WORLD. The fig-tree, luxuriating in the pride of leaves, was denounced, not because it distilled poison, but because it produced no fruit; and it was not the positively criminal, but the merely unprofitable servant, in the Gospel, who was cast into outer darkness. IV. A SENSE OF RECONCILIATION WITH MANKIND will furnish a contribution to the peace with which the disciple of Jesus may expect to cheer his last moments. V. A fifth particular contributory towards a latter end of peace is AN EARLY AND SINCERE REPENTANCE. (*J. Grant, M.A.*) *The good man and his end*:—I. HIS CHARACTER. 1. "Perfect." His holiness is so perfect as to prevail over wilful and habitual sin; his love to God so perfect, as to be the reigning disposition of his soul; his choice so perfect, that he considers and takes God as his chief good; his obedience, that he yields unto God his soul and body to glorify Him, and by the grace of God is able to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. 2. "Upright." He does not deceive his own heart, but examines himself; is no hypocrite, but serves God in spirit and in truth; and as he would that others should do unto him, so he does unto them. II. HIS CONDUCT. 1. In the world. Single and uncorrupted. 2. In the family. He walks before his house with a perfect heart; instructs them in the knowledge of God and divine things; travails in birth for their salvation; sets them an example of piety and devotedness to God. 3. In the church. He loves the brethren with a pure heart fervently—he helps to bear their burdens—sympathizes with them in their sorrows—joins them in their labours—assembles with them for pious fellowship, and the public worship of their God and Saviour. 4. In private. He seeks and enjoys retirement for meditation and prayer. 5. In the different states of life. In prosperity his heart is not lifted up within him, but he remembers the God of all his mercies, and acknowledges his indebtedness to Him. In adversity he considers, reflects, seeks to gather the lessons intended to be taught, submits to the rod, and Him who appointed it. III. HIS END. "Peace." 1. Mark him as an example to be followed. 2. Mark him as having his end assuredly peace. 3. Mark him as an encouragement to Christians in all times of their affliction and sufferings. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *Mark the perfect man*:—I. THE TERMS IN WHICH THE PSALMIST SPEAKS OF HIM. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright;" the man whose perfection, though conspicuous enough to be observed with admiration, is no deceitful cover, or mere superficial gilding, but an inward reality; and the genuine, consistent effect of a principle which dictates an habitual respect unto all God's commandments. Behold him living from Him, living upon Him, living to Him, a life of faith in an invisible God and Redeemer; and a life of love and devotedness



to Him both in public and in private; invariably faithful in his adherence to His revealed will; zealous in his attachment to His cause; contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but with a spirit of meekness, and a constant disposition to hold the truth in love; affectionate in his good wishes and prayers, and active in his services to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of all around him. II. His end. A final period, at least here, to every interview of friendship, to every exercise of social devotion, and to every service for God and his fellow-creatures. His instructions, cautions, counsels, consolations, prayers, all ended. The place that once knew him, that knew him often and intimately, now knows him no more. All he was doing or thinking to do in the house of God, or in his own, for the Redeemer's interest, and to extend his happiness and usefulness in his several connections here, at an end. III. PEACE. This may be intended as a representation both of his state on this side, and beyond the grave. 1. Peace is valuable at all times, and in every connection: peace in nations and neighbourhoods, in churches and in families: above all, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus." 2. Peace with God, as his God and Father in Christ. 3. Peace in a review of past engagements with the Lord, and for Him (2 Tim. iv. 6-8). 4. Peace in the expectation of a removal. 5. Peace in prospect of an hereafter. IV. THE ATTENTION WHICH WE OUGHT TO PAY TO THE IMPORTANT CHARACTER, AND TO THE DELIGHTFUL END WHICH THE TEXT SPECIFIES. 1. Mark it, in order to form a right judgment of yourselves. 2. Mark it, sinners and hypocrites, for admonition and caution. 3. Mark it for imitation, all of you that desire his end. (S. Addington.)

Ver. 38. **The end of the wicked shall be cut off.**—*The end of the wicked:*—The condition of the sinner is an awful one notwithstanding things may seem lovely and fair to him now. He resembles the man who lives in a magnificent mansion on the brow of a volcano, the situation is beautiful, the scenery is beautiful, the sky is beautiful, the air is beautiful, but there are fires that work beneath. These will one day rive the mountain, blacken the sky, and engulf the mansion and its proprietor. (R. Venting.)

Vers. 39, 40. **The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.**—*A testimony to free and sovereign grace:*—"The salvation of the righteous" in the broadest sense of the word "is of the Lord"; and the more breadth of meaning we give to it, the more completely we shall see that it must be divine. At the same time, our life is made up of a series of salvations, and each of these is of the Lord. We are constantly being saved, saved from this and that form of danger and evil. As each daily trouble threatens to engulf us, we are saved from it. As each temptation, like a dragon, threatens to swallow us up, we are saved from it. Our God is the God of salvations. I. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, even of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in—1. The planning. 2. The providing. 3. The beginning. 4. The carrying on. 5. The completion. II. THIS IS A NECESSARY FACT. The saints recognize it; for—1. Their inward conflicts make them know that God alone must work salvation. They are too fickle and feeble to save themselves. 2. Their outward temptations drive them to the same conclusion. They are well kept whom God keeps, but none else. 3. The world's hate drives them away from all hope in that quarter. God is greater than a world in arms. 4. Their daily trials and afflictions would crush them if Omnipotence did not sustain them. Only God's grace can be all-sufficient. 5. The perishing of hypocrites is a sad proof of how little man can do. Temporary believers perish like blossoms which never knit to fruit, and therefore fall from the tree. III. THIS IS A SWEET CONSOLATION. This truth, that unto God the Lord belongeth the salvation of His saints, acts graciously—1. Leading them to solid trust. 2. Exciting them to believing prayer. 3. Urging them to look out of self. 4. Inspiring them with great thoughts of God, and—5. Leading them to offer adoring praise unto their Redeemer. IV. THIS IS A REASON FOR HUMILITY. 1. It strips the righteous of all pride in the fact of their being saved. 2. Of all exaltation of self because they continue in their integrity. 3. Of all undue censure of the fallen; for they, themselves, would have failed had not the Lord upheld them. 4. Of all self-confidence as to the future, since their weakness is inherent and abiding. 5. Of all self-glorying, even in heaven, since in all things they are debtors to sovereign grace. V. THIS IS A FRUITFUL GROUND OF HOPE. 1. In reference to our own difficulties: God can give us deliverance.

2. In reference to our tried brethren : the Lord can sustain, sanctify, and deliver them. 3. In reference to seeking souls : we may leave their cases in the Saviour's hands. He is able to save to the uttermost. 4. In reference to sinners : they cannot be too degraded, obstinate, ignorant, or false ; God can work salvation even in the worst. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

## PSALM XXXVIII.

**VERS. 1-22. O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath : neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.**—*Great personal affliction*.—I. ELEMENTS OF AGGRAVATION. 1. A dread of Divine displeasure (ver. 1). 2. A crushing sense of sin (ver. 4). 3. The desertion of professed friends (ver. 11). 4. The assaults of enemies (vers. 19, 20). II. MEANS OF RELIEF. 1. Remembrance of God's cognizance of his sufferings (ver. 9). 2. Power of self-control (ver. 13). 3. Unbounded confidence in God (ver. 15). 4. Penitential confession of sin (ver. 18). 5. Importunate appeals to heaven. (*Homilist.*) *Things to be remembered*.—The title to this psalm is : "A psalm of David, to bring to remembrance." This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace, and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. I. Among the things that David brought to his own remembrance were HIS PAST TRIALS AND HIS PAST DELIVERANCES. 1. Such a remembrance will prevent your imagining that you have come into the land of ease and perfect rest. 2. They will refresh your memories with regard to the mercy of God, and so will stir you up to gratitude. 3. Such a remembrance will be of great service to you, if you are at this time enduring the like exercises. What God was, that He is. Having begun to deliver you, He will not afterwards forsake you. II. The great point, however, in David's psalm is to BRING TO REMEMBRANCE THE DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE. There perhaps is no psalm which more fully than this describes human nature as seen in the light which God the Holy Ghost casts upon it in the time when He convinces us of sin. It is a spiritual leprosy, it is an inward disease which is here described, and David paints it to the very life, and he would have us recollect this. Child of God, let me bring to your remembrance the fact that you are by nature no better than the vilest of the vile. "Children of wrath even as others," are you. Remember old John Bradford's remark ; whenever he saw a man go by his window to Tyburn to be hanged—and he lived at that time where he saw them all—"Ah!" said he, "there goes John Bradford if the grace of God had not prevented." III. A third thing the psalm brings to our remembrance is OUR MANY ENEMIES. David says that his enemies laid snares for him, and sought his hurt, and spoke mischievous things, and devised deceits all day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or perhaps morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy, because he loved the thing which is good. Now you must not suppose that because you seek to live in all peaceableness and righteousness, that therefore everybody will be peaceable towards you. "I come not to send peace upon earth, but a sword." The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere, but the first result is to cause strife. When the light comes, it must contend with the darkness ; when the truth comes, it must first combat error ; and when the Gospel comes, it must meet with enemies ; and the man who receives the Gospel will find that his foes shall be they of his own household. IV. The psalm reminds us of OUR GRACIOUS GOD. Praise the grace that has held you till now. Keep in remembrance the patience of God in enduring with you, the power of God in restraining you, the love of God in instructing you, and the goodness of God in keeping you to this day. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

**Ver. 2. For Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore.**—*God's arrows*.—Those arrows commonly are either wicked men or devils, whom God sendeth forth to afflict His own children, sharp as arrows, light and swift

as arrows, and ready to do harm to God's saints; or else sickness, poverty, infamy, and such other afflictions, whereby our most gracious Father thinketh most fit to subdue our vile corruption: all which, albeit in their own nature they are evil, yet God can convert and turn them to the utility and profit of His own children. As a physician can use the most poisonous and venomous herbs to cure the most desperate diseases; yea, the flesh of the dead serpent, to cure the wound gotten by the living serpent: so God can convert and turn the mischievous machinations of our enemies to our salvation. (*A. Symson.*)

**Ver. 3. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger.**—He proceedeth to exaggerate and amplify the greatness of his grief from the universality thereof; that his sickness was not laid on any one part of his body, but upon his whole flesh, and upon all his bones. His flesh is his exterior part, his bones his interior. Albeit the ulcers and wounds of his flesh were very sensible to him, and more horrible in the eyes of men who beheld them (as that of Job and Lazarus), which he might have apprehended deeply when as by them he was made contemptible in the eyes of men: yet his inward pain, which was more felt than seen, maketh him thus pitifully to cry. Wherein we have these things to consider. 1. That as all members agreed together to the performance of his filthy lust, so every one of them receiveth a deserved punishment. And it is good for man that he should be thus chastised in this world for a little time, rather than that he should be reserved for everlasting darkness, where every member shall receive eternal pain for their sin. For as sin pleaseth nature, so doth it destroy and consume nature. 2. He setteth forth the cause of those punishments, even God's wrath, because of his sin. For when those two meet together, they are as fire and flax; God's wrath as fire, will soon devour the stubble of our sins. 3. Observe that David maketh not God's wrath the only cause of his miseries and heavy sickness; for that were to charge God of unrighteousness; but he justifieth God, when he acknowledgeth that his own sin was the cause of all his evils. And surely we can never give sufficient honour to God, except we free Him of all imputations of unjust dealing, and acknowledge ourselves to be the cause of our own miseries. (*A. Symson.*)

**Ver. 4. Mine iniquities are gone over my head.**—*Sins compared to deepening waters.*—He compareth his sins to waters which, albeit, at the first entrance they seem so shallow, that scarce they touch our ankles; yet the further we go into them, they prove the deeper, and soon pass from our knees to our shoulders, and over our head, and drown us, except God provide a remedy; as if a plank or board be cast unto one in danger of drowning, whereupon, taking hold, he may easily escape the danger; even so we go from sin to sin, and from less to greater, until that many sins meeting and concurring together overgo us; and we, filling the cup of our iniquity, be poisoned with the dregs thereof. Therefore, let us take heed, and turn back in time, lest going forward, contemning such warnings, we become self-murderers, murderers of our own selves. We have better waters, through which we may go in safety, the waters of Siloah, which run softly, by which we may refresh our own souls; the blessed blood of Jesus Christ; and the waters of Ezekiel (xlvi. 12) which flow in the sanctuary, that we may grow from grace to grace, till we come to glory. (*A. Symson.*)

**Ver. 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.**—*Suffering for sin.*—I. DAVID'S UNHAPPY SITUATION. 1. The pain and anguish he felt on account of sin (Job. xx. 12–14; Ps. lxxxviii. 15). 2. Shame and self-abhorrence (Prov. xiii. 5; Job. xlii. 6). 3. Danger. Though the principle of spiritual life be not totally extinguished in a true believer, yet by the prevalence of particular corruptions it may be brought into a very languishing state, and sometimes it seems as if it were giving up the ghost (Rev. iii. 2). II. THE CAUSE TO WHICH HIS UNHAPPY SITUATION IS ATTRIBUTED. "My foolishness." 1. In sinning against God, he committed folly in Israel (1 Sam. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. xxiv. 10). Sin must needs be folly, not only because it is contrary to the most sacred obligations, but because it is opposite to our best interests. Whatever injury we may thereby do to others, the greatest injury will be to ourselves. It is following after lying vanities, and forsaking our own mercies. 2. It was folly in David to persist in sin, after it was once committed. 3. His folly appeared in not confessing his sin, as the only means of obtaining effectual relief (Prov. xxviii. 13;

1 John i. 9; Jer. iii. 18; Ps. xxxii. 5). 4. The principal part of David's folly, and that for which he took blame to himself was, that he had so long neglected the remedy, after sin had been committed, and that he had not applied to that mercy which blots out all our transgressions. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

**Ver. 8. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly: I go mourning all the day long.**—*On religious despondency*:—Those who have lived without Christ and only unto themselves, whether in greater or less degree, are apt, when brought to serious spiritual concern, to fall into despondency. I. **TO DESCRIBE THIS DESPONDENCY.** They are under a delusion, they imagine all things are against them; they become restless, nervous, averse to all exertion; agitated in mind, neglect all duty; they sink into listless melancholy. And all this makes them worse. The worldly prescribe dissipation and amusement for them. They themselves attempt by austerities, or religious reading, to get relief. The Bible does not help them. They think themselves to be becoming more and more odious in the sight of God. Some try to turn them from all religious thought; others censure them severely. But all the while the soul only becomes confirmed in its distress. II. **CONSIDER HOW A CURE IS TO BE WROUGHT.** 1. By seeing to it that repentance is real. 2. By assurance that God will have mercy upon him. III. **HINDRANCES TO THE RECEPTION OF THESE TRUTHS.** 1. Some urge that they have sinned beyond all hope of mercy. 2. Others think that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. But the very fact of their repentance disproves that, for repentance is the gift of the Holy Ghost. He, therefore, cannot have forsaken them. 3. Others despair because they have led others into sin. But so did Aaron, Manasseh, Paul, and in short all great sinners; but yet they found forgiveness. 4. Others conclude that as they have been so long time without comfort and peace, though sincere in seeking it, therefore it cannot be designed for them. 5. Yet others are darkened still more by erroneous doctrine. They deem themselves predestined to wrath. IV. **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO THE DESPONDING.** Read the Bible as a whole. Regard your sins as reasons for humility and watchfulness, not as preventing forgiveness. If despondency recur, regard it as your trial and temptation, and resist it (Ps. lvii. 7–10). Take care of your bodily health. Keep calm and quiet. Be actively and usefully employed. (*Thomas Gisborne, M.A.*)

**Ver. 9. Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee.**—*God's knowledge of our desires*:—I. We have here a FACT THAT IS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. The Lord knows all our desires. How great, then, must God be, and how near such knowledge brings us to God. II. **THE PERFORMANCE OF AN IMPORTANT DUTY.** David was in the habit of prayer. He does not speak of his prayer as an unusual thing, or that should make men talk of him as eminently religious. Now, such habitual prayer is our duty. Do not restrain prayer, and remember, the groaning that is directed to God is very often effectual fervent prayer. III. **A STATE OF HALLOWED PRIVILEGE.** If the text be true of us, then there is no need for anxiety. God will surely do what is best for me. IV. **A LARGE PROVISION OF REST FOR THE SOUL.** How quiet a man may be, and ought to be, who can speak thus to God. It is the childlike converse of a man with his God. V. **A COMFORTABLE THOUGHT FOR SEASONS OF WEAKNESS AND DISCOURAGEMENT.** What a comfort it is to feel that God knows all, that He will accept as real prayer the utterance of a mere groan. VI. It is also a PLEA IN PRAYER. "I have told Thee all, now do as Thou hast said." (*Samuel Martin.*) *Desires towards God*:—We would not pamper weakness till we seem to offer a premium to unbelief; but yet we would feed the feeble in the king's meadows till they become strong in the Lord. If great efforts are put forth to build or endow a hospital, you do not say, "Sickness is a desirable thing, for all this money is spent upon comforting and helping those who feel it." Your feelings are quite the contrary: though these sick folk become the object of care, it is not as a reward to them, but as an act of compassion towards them. Let none, therefore, say that the preacher encourages a low state of grace: he encourages it no more than the physician encourages disease when he tries by his care and skill to heal the sick. I. **DESIRE TOWARDS GOD SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO HIM.** 1. Because our whole life ought to be transparent before God. What secrets can there be between a soul convinced of sin and a pardoning God? Tell Him your fears for the past, your anxieties for the present, and your dreads for the future; tell

Him your suspicions of yourself, and your trembling lest you should be deceived. Make all your heart known unto God, and keep back nothing, for much benefit will come to you from being honest with your best Friend. 2. Because it is commanded of God that we should make our desires known to him. He says that "men ought always to pray and not to faint"; and again, "in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." Jesus said, "Watch and pray," and His apostle said, "I will that men pray everywhere." And what is this but to make your desires known to God? 3. It is a great benefit to a man to be able to express his desires, and this is an argument for making them known to God. A glance at some desires would seal their doom, for we should feel them to be unworthy to be presented before the Lord. But when it is a holy and pure desire, tell it, for it will relieve your heart, it will heighten your estimate of the blessing sought, it will bring you to think over the promises made to such desires, it will thereby strengthen your hope that your desire will be fulfilled, and enable you by faith to obtain it. The prayerful expression of one desire will often quicken further desires, and make a thousand of them where there was but one. 4. A gracious expression of desire before God will often be to you a proof that those desires are right. Thy desire must be a good thing, or thou wouldst not dare to make it known to God; and seeing that it is a good thing, take care thou nurture it well, and cause it to grow by expressing it with thy whole heart before God.

II. DESIRES TOWARDS GOD ARE GRACIOUS THINGS. Intense groaning desires towards God are in themselves works of grace. 1. For certainly they are associated with other graces. When a man can say, "All my desire is towards God, and my heart groans after Him, and yet I find little in myself but these desires," I think we can point to some other good things which are in his heart. Surely humility is apparent enough. Thou takest a right view of thyself, O man of desires! A lowly esteem hast thou of thyself, and this is well. Aye, and there is faith in thee, for no man heartily desires to believe unless he doth in some measure already believe. There is a measure of believing in every true desire after believing. And thou hast love, too; I am sure of it. Did ever a man desire to love that which he did not love already? Thou hast already some drawings of thy heart Christwards, or else thou wouldst not cry to be more filled with it. He who loves most is the very man who most passionately desires to love more. I am sure, also, that thou hast some hope; for a man does not continue to groan out before his God, and to make his desire known, unless he has some hope that his desire will be satisfied, and that his grief will be assuaged. David lets out the secret of his own hope, for he says in the fifteenth verse, "In Thee, O Lord, do I hope." You do not hope anywhere else, do you? 2. Another proof that they are gracious is that they come from God. Now, as God can say of all that He creates, "It is very good," I come to the conclusion that these groaning desires after God are very good. They are not great, nor strong, but they are gracious. There is water in a drop as well as in the sea, there is life in a gnat as well as in an elephant, there is light in a beam as well as in the sun, and so is there grace in a desire as truly as in complete sanctification. 3. Holy desires are a great test of character: a test of eminent value. You inquire, "Can you judge a man's character by his desires?" I answer, yes. I will give you the other side of the question that you may see our own side all the more clearly. You may certainly judge a bad man by his desires. Here is a man who desires to be a thief. Well, he is a thief in heart and spirit. Who would trust him in his house now that he knows that he groans to rob and steal? Let us, then, measure out justice in our own case by the rule which we allow towards others. If you have an earnest, agonizing desire towards that which is right, even though through the infirmity of the flesh and the corruption of your nature you do not reach to the height of your desire, yet that desire is a test of your character. The main set of the current determines its direction: the main bent of the desire is the test of the life.

III. DESIRES TOWARDS GOD ARE CAREFULLY OBSERVED BY HIM. God has a quick eye to spy out anything that is good in His people; if there is but one speck of soundness, if there is a single mark of grace, if there is any remaining token of spiritual life, though it be only a faint desire, though it be only a dolorous groan, the Father sees it, and records it, casting the evil behind His back, and refusing to behold it.

IV. EARNEST DESIRES TOWARDS GOD WILL BE FULFILLED. 1. These desires are of God's creation, and you cannot imagine that God would create desires in us which He will not satisfy. Why, look even in nature, if He gives the beast hunger and thirst

He provides for it the grass upon the mountains and the streams that flow among the valleys. If, then, He Himself has put in you a desire after Himself, He will give you Himself. If He has made you long after pardon, purity, eternal salvation, He means to give you these. 2. Remember, O desiring man, that already you have a blessing. When our Divine Master was on the mountain-side the benedictions which He pronounced were no word blessings, but they were full of weight and meaning, and among the rest of them is this—"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Blessed while they hunger, blessed while they thirst. Yea, they are already blessed, and there is this at the back of it, "for they shall be filled." 3. And we may be sure that God will hear the desires which He has Himself created, because He loves to gratify right desires. It is said of Him in nature, "Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Doth God care for sparrows in the bush, for minnows in the brook, for midges in the air, for tiny things in a drop of stagnant water, and will He fail to satisfy the longings of His own children? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Our groaning not hid from God.*—The wistful look of a dumb creature, or a moan of pain, is a prayer to a merciful man. Man deals tenderly with those who are robbed of the organs of expression. He watches with sedulous earnestness each faint indication of pain or need, that he may be ready with his ministry. Is the ear of God more dull, think you, than man's, to these unutterable groanings; or is this human pity and sympathy the faint and finite image of an infinite pity and sympathy which are waiting to respond to us there? Pity which, great as may be the power of prayer which words can frame, finds in the longing that is too deep for words, the groaning that is too sad for tears, an appeal which is irresistible, and would even endure the sharpness of death rather than that such a suppliant should be sent empty away. I. THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER. 1. It cleans and purifies the desires. The effort to utter them before God in prayer is a purification. Many a mixed desire which lies confusedly in the mind, filling it with distress, gets purified by the effort. The bringing it into God's presence is like bringing a mass of rank vegetation into the sunlight. Leave it there awhile. The pure fire of God's presence kills all that is noxious in the desire, all that is born of worldliness and lust. II. The second clause opens a yet deeper depth. There are groanings which cannot become prayers, and "MY GROANING IS NOT HID FROM THEE." Would that I could pray! is the language, in moments of deep religious feeling, of many a vain, selfish, worldly, or lustful heart; I should feel then that the battle was really gained. There are times when the effort to pray seems almost impious. A kind of dull despair weighs on the spirit, and crushes down all its energies. "When I would do good, evil is present with me," "O miserable man that I am." What help can there be, what hope, for such an one as I? "Brethren, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But there is a mightier thing still; something that lodges a more resistless appeal in the very heart of the Divine compassion: it is the pain that cannot tell its misery in a prayer. It is a blessed thing for me that God heareth and answereth prayer; more blessed still, that "My groaning is not hid from Thee." (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 12. **They also that seek after my life lay snares for me.—When friends are slow in helping, foes are most busy:**—Our friends should blush, that the wicked are more instant against us, than they are to maintain us. But it is no wonder, since by nature men are more bent and prone to evil than to do good things. By constraint they do good, but willingly they commit evil. 1. Their profit and pastime was to undo me. The order is here inverted; for meditating properly precedeth speaking, and speaking doing; but in the words of the text it is otherways; their malice extendeth to the highest degree, they will not be contented to banish him, prison him, and revile him, nothing can satisfy their thirst but his blood. This is the envy of the serpent against the seed of the woman. The devil is a murderer, and so are his children. 2. The means which they used against him: their purposes, their words, and their actions. They meditated, they consulted; for wrongs done rashly are less dangerous, and more excusable, out of a spleen and cholera; but advised evils are more fearful, and more hardly to be eschewed, laying the grounds and pillars of their proceedings upon some sure hold. But we have one advantage, that God is present in all their counsels, and cannot only reveal them, but also disappoint them. 3. Finally, those their meditations and communications, which proceeded from cruel hearts,

burst forth in actions which were mixed with craft, and so much the more perilous, for they are said to lay snares for him: taking the metaphor from hunters, fowlers or fishers, whose trade is only to catch birds, beasts and fishes by their engines and policy, seeing hardly they can be taken otherways. (A. Symson.)

Ver. 15. **For in Thee, O Lord, do I hope.**—*Hope's lever*:—You have heard, no doubt, of the great Grecian mechanician who once said, "If I had a lever long and strong enough, and a fulcrum on which to rest it, I could move the earth." Such was the philosopher's confidence in the power of the mechanical lever. There is in the world of mind and spirit a corresponding power which we call Hope. What can be stronger than this sacred, invisible influence? See that man yonder, going along with his head bent; when he speaks, there is no music in his voice, and no light in his eye. What is the cause? You reply, "Ah, that man has lost all his hope." Remove this divine influence from us, and existence, to the poor, and sick, and disappointed, would be like an eternal night without a star. Hope is a Divinely-given grace to bear us heavenward, like the wings of a bird. And as a bird puts forth efforts to fly, so we should continually aspire to be better men and women than we are. I. HOPE INSPIRES US TO ACT AS IF WE IN REALITY COULD SEE AND HEAR GOD SPEAKING TO US. When we read in the Gospel that God forgives sin, hope inspires us to believe that our Father has really forgiven us. The men on yonder ship which has sprung a leak, hoist a flag of distress, and while that steamer passes by they hope her captain will see their message and deliver them from peril and distress. So, with the same feeling, a man when in sorrow, or when he feels that without some great change taking place he will sink utterly in sin—that man goes into his room, shuts the door, kneels down, and lifts his flag of distress to God in the cry, "Lord, save me; I perish!" And as no humane sailor would pass by a ship which carries a flag of distress, neither will God pass by the cry of any man, or woman, or child, who calls upon Him in trouble. II. GOD HAS GIVEN US THE FACULTY OF HOPE IN ORDER THAT IT MAY PROMPT US TO GREAT ACTIONS. The prodigal of whom we read in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, was a very feeble creature. The parable is not told us to exalt the prodigal, but to show God's love and forgiveness. But hope in his father's love prompted him to arise and go to his father: it lifted him from hell to heaven. So, do not be afraid of the self-denial of becoming a Christian. You will suffer; it is not for me to deceive you. The man who will live a true Christian life does suffer. Ah, but there is a divine sweetness in it, such as never comes from sin. Let hope come into your breast. You can be sober; you can be self-denying; you can be truthful; you can be honest and manly in the highest sense of these words. Let hope in God's Word encourage you to believe that you can do great and good actions. III. THERE IS HOPE IN DEATH. Have you this hope? If so, and your life is right with God and with man, you will be ready for death. (W. Birch.)

Ver. 17. **For I am ready to halt.**—*Resolution almost exhausted*:—We reach the "I will" by "I must" and "I ought." Now, this struggle with self-will is like a man with narrow chest and feeble lungs walking in the teeth of a biting north-east wind; it is like a bare-footed girl treading a road made with rough stones and sharp flints; it is like a feeble man climbing a mountain by a rocky path beneath a noon-day sun; and under the exhaustion of resolution and courage and patience there be many that say, "I am ready to halt." (Samuel Martin.)

Ver. 18. **I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.**—*Of confession of sin*:—I. WHAT CONFESSION OF SIN IS. It is a declaration of acknowledgment of some moral evil or fault to another. II. HOW FAR CONFESSION OF OUR SINS IS NECESSARY. 1. It is a necessary part of repentance, that we should confess our sins to God, with a due sense of the evil of them (Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9). 2. As for our confessing our sins to men, both Scripture and reason do, in some cases, recommend and enjoin it. (1) In order to the obtaining of the prayers of good men for us (James v. 16). (2) In order to the ease and satisfaction of our minds, and our being directed in our duty for the future. (3) In case our sins have been public and scandalous, both reason and the practice of the Christian Church do require, that, when men have publicly offended, they should give public satisfaction and open testimony of their repentance. (J. Tillotson.) *Sorrow for sin*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS PASSION. Sorrow is a trouble or disturbance of mind,

occasioned by something that is evil, done or suffered by us, or which we are in danger of suffering, that tends greatly to our damage or mischief: so that to be sorry for a thing is nothing else but to be sensibly affected with the consideration of the evil of it, and of the mischief and inconvenience which is like to redound to us from it; which, if it be a moral evil, such as sin is, to be sorry for it, is to be troubled that we have done it, and to wish with all our hearts that we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; and if this sorrow be true and real, if it abide and stay upon us, it will produce a firm purpose and resolution in us, not to do the like for the future. II. THE REASON AND GROUNDS OF OUR SORROW FOR SIN. 1. The great mischief that sin is like to bring upon us. 2. Another and better principle of sorrow for sin is ingenuity; because we are sensible that we have carried ourselves very unworthily towards God, and have been injurious to Him, who hath laid all possible obligations upon us. III. THE MEASURE AND DEGREE OF OUR SORROW FOR SIN. 1. Sin being so great an evil in itself, and of so pernicious a consequence to us, it cannot be too much lamented and grieved for by us; and the more and greater our sins have been, and the longer we have continued and lived in them, they call for so much the greater sorrow, and deeper humiliation from us; for the reasoning of our Saviour, "She loved much, because much was forgiven her," is proportionably true in this case—those who have sinned much, should sorrow the more. 2. If we would judge aright of the truth of our sorrow for sin, we must not measure it so much by the degrees of sensible trouble and affliction, as by the rational effects of it, which are hatred of sin, and a fixed purpose and resolution against it for the future. IV. HOW FAR THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF OUR INWARD GRIEF BY TEARS IS NECESSARY TO A TRUE REPENTANCE. The usual sign and outward expression of sorrow is tears; but these being not the substance of our duty, but an external testimony of it, which some tempers are more unapt to than others; we are much less to judge of the truth of our sorrow for sin by these, than by our inward sensible trouble and affliction of spirit. He that cannot weep like a child may resolve like a man, and that undoubtedly will find acceptance with God. Two persons walking together espy a serpent; the one shrieks and cries out at the sight of it, the other kills it: so it is in sorrow for sin; some express it by great lamentation and tears, and vehement transports of passions; others by greater and more real effects of hatred and detestation, by forsaking their sins, and by mortifying and subduing their lusts: but he that kills it does certainly best express his inward displeasure and enmity against it. The application shall be in two particulars—

1. By way of caution, and that against a double mistake about sorrow for sin. (1) Some look upon trouble and sorrow for sin as the whole of repentance. If this were so, there would be store of penitents in hell; for there is the deepest and most intense sorrow, "weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth." (2) Another mistake which men ought to be cautioned against in this matter is, of those who exact from themselves such a degree of sorrow for sin as ends in deep melancholy, as renders them unfit both for the duties of religion, and of their particular callings. The end of sorrow for sin is the forsaking of it and returning to our duty; but he that sorrows for sin, so as to unfit him for his duty, defeats his own design, and destroys the end he aims at. 2. The other part of the application of this discourse should be to stir up this affection of sorrow in us. If the holy men in Scripture, David, and Jeremiah, and St. Paul, were so deeply affected with the sins of others as to shed rivers of tears at the remembrance of them, how ought we to be touched with the sense of our own sins, who are equally concerned in the dishonour brought to God by them, and infinitely more in the danger they expose us to! Can we weep for our dead friends; and have we no sense of that heavy load of guilt, of that body of death which we carry about with us? Can we be sad and melancholy for temporal losses and sufferings, and "refuse to be comforted;" and is it no trouble to us to have lost heaven and happiness, and to be in continual danger of the intolerable sufferings and endless torments of another world? I shall only offer to your consideration the great benefit and advantage which will redound to us from this godly sorrow; "it worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." If we would thus "sow in tears," we should "reap in joy." (*Ibid.*) *Hindrances to repentance:*—1. There are various ways, and there are many ways, in which men try to hide themselves from themselves; to escape their own detection; wilfully to evade their own nominal search. (1) One of these is the sorcery of words. Men call sins, which they see others commit, by their true names; they call their own sins by false



and glosing names. What is pride in others is in themselves proper spirit; what is slander in others is in themselves moral indignation; what is cheating in others is in themselves legitimate profit; what is in others an immoral acquiescence is in themselves a practical common sense; what is in others licence is in themselves Christian liberty. (2) Men will hardly ever look at their own actual deeds in connection with their own true motives. They live two lives. One is their common, habitual round of conduct, which is often base, and mean, and unworthy. The other is their traditional and imaginative homage to righteousness, which is upright and respectable. Their lives are a stately temple front; its frieze is sculptured with heroic imagery; its entablature, like that of our Royal Exchange, is enriched with a pious inscription. Alas! alas! Enter beyond the vestibule, and in some inmost shrine, noiseless and far away, approached, it may be, only by secret stairs and half-hidden entrances—there, in little, mean, dark closets, so completely behind their ostensible lives and their expressed opinions, that they almost succeed in hiding it from themselves, all the bad, the impure, the dishonourable work of their lives is done! (3) They freely condemn every other sin but the one to which they are themselves addicted. (4) They find the sweet, soft pleadings of egotism and of self-love so irresistible, that anything seems to be at least excusable which results from yielding to such temptations. Religion appeals to the reason and to the spirit; it nerves and braces: it puts iron into our resolutions; it infuses the soul with manliness, and the will with strength. And, on the other hand, sins—the sins of the world, the flesh and the devil—degrade us into the animal; they unnerve, they effeminate, they debase, they paralyze; they bid us listen to the base pleadings of a “miserable, hungry, shivering self,” which is, like a crawling serpent, ever rustling amid the dead leaves of our weakened purposes, and ever hissing in our own ears: “Only this once.” “There is no harm in it.” “Thou shalt not surely die.” This is the explanation, and the only possible one, of the insane infatuation which so often marks either the whole lives or the sudden actions of many men. 2. What should be our protection against these specious thoughts of our own heart and our own counsel? God has not left you unshielded. He has assigned the soul of man to the special, immediate guardianship of two pure and strong holy spirits. The name of one of those great archangels of our being is Duty—Duty, that angel so stern and yet so beautiful! And the name of the other great archangel is Conscience—Conscience, “that aboriginal vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its prepotency, a priest in its blessings and anathemas,” with a voice now like the blast of a trumpet, now thrilling, and still, and small. (Dean Farrar.)

### PSALM XXXIX.

VERS. 1-13. I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue; I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle.—*Thought and prayer under trial*.—I. THOUGHT UNDER TRIAL. 1. Its utterance repressed. “I said, I will take heed to my ways.” (1) This effort at repression was pious. Why did he essay to “muzzle” his tongue? “That I sin not.” He felt in all probability that the circumstances which brought on his sufferings had awakened within him such sceptical ideas concerning the rectitude or benevolence of the Divine procedure, the utterance of which, in the ears of the wicked, while they were “before him,” would be highly sinful. (2) This effort at repression was painful. Imprisoned thoughts, like pent-up floods, increase in turbulent force; the more they are suppressed, the more they heave, swell, and battle. (3) This effort at repression was temporary. His thoughts became at last irrepressible. “I spake with my tongue.” To whom? Not to ungodly men—this he resolved not to do because it was sinful—but to the great Jehovah. 2. Its attention arrested. The character of life. Its terminableness. Its frailty. Its brevity. Its vanity. Its emptiness. Its disquietudes. Its worthless labours. (Homilist.) *The unspoken judgment of mankind*.—Scripture speaks in two different ways about judging

others. On the one hand, it says, "Judge nothing before the time, till the day of the Lord come;" on the other hand, it says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things;" and we are told to regard the Holy Spirit, of which we partake, as a spirit of discernment. Nor, if this discernment exists in Christians, can we confine it to distinguishing only flagrant sinners from well-conducted men? No; it extends much further than that; it goes much deeper. Christians who are endowed with the spirit of holiness, and who have with that gift the spirit also of wisdom and knowledge, can see where the heart is right in others, and where it is not. This is part of that very unconscious power which lies in goodness as such; for goodness finds not goodness in others. On the other hand, disguise it how they will, the contrary character is detected, and repels. So that goodness, as such, has a true wisdom in it. But, perhaps, the great law with respect to judging which is laid down in our texts refers to the delivery of the judgment, it is not to be allowed full expression and manifestation. The judgment will be an outspoken one, ours may not be so. Scripture holds before us the terror of a dreadful exposure when "the secrets of all hearts shall be made known" (Luke viii; xii. 3). But the tongue of intermediate judgment is tied. There is an embargo laid upon the delivery of it. This, then, is the meaning of "the bridle while the ungodly is in my sight." A judgment of some kind is implied, but it is to be a mute judgment. In this temper of the psalmist, then, we observe first, a greater strength than belongs to the other temper of impetuous and premature expression—strength not only of self-control, but of actual feeling and passion. Such a state of mind must needs be stronger, since it does not require the proof which immediate, impetuous expression affords. It is because they feel they want this support of outward expression that therefore men make this outward demonstration. The force of our language reacts upon ourselves, and our minds are encouraged by it, so that their own inward conviction does not give way. They want their verdict sustained. Hence this mute form of judgment must needs be strong. The circumstances of the world are such, that this greater strength of feeling, this silent form of judgment, is positively needed to meet them. For consider what the perpetual expression of judgment, what the constant reply to the challenge of the other side would entail. This challenge is always going on. It is impossible to live in the world without constantly hearing admiration and praise lavished on that which we know in our hearts to be hollow and inferior in character. The world generally accepts success as a test; indeed, popular judgment is almost obliged to be exceedingly rough. It must take men as they stand, and accept the mechanical praise which flows from a law of public opinion. And, indeed, the exposure of the bad in this world is all but impossible. But if no judgment, however true in the sanctuary of the heart, can declare itself, by the very conditions of society, this is a clear revelation of the will of God that such a manifestation must not be attempted, and that to attempt it would be to forestall His divine purpose. And then we have nothing to fall back upon but the rule of the psalmist—the rule of a mute and silent judgment. "I will keep my mouth, as it were," etc. But such men do not escape judgment altogether. The good judge them, and make up their minds about them, though it be unuttered. Is there not an unspoken sentence upon him, a silent verdict in the consciences of the righteous and holy which goes deeper than "explanations"? And is not this mute verdict an anticipation of that judgment which will not be silent but outspoken—the disclosure and manifestation of the human heart which will take place at the last day? Nay, and is there not even a judgment in his own heart which he does not pass altogether comfortably? Is there not a voice within him which would speak if he would let it, and did not suppress it; and which, if it did speak, would scatter to the winds all his refuges of lies. Let us fear that. (*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*) *Evil speaking, and the proper means to prevent it*.—I. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS RESOLUTION, and particularly with respect to us, as Christians, not to offend with the tongue. 1. Evil speaking brings a great scandal upon our holy religion, as it is so directly opposite to the genius and spirit of it, to the many express precepts which occur in it, and that goodness and candour of temper which so remarkably discovered itself in our blessed Saviour. 2. The injustice of this crime with respect to others. (1) It is a very evident truth, that according to the worth of anything, wherein we invade another man's right, the wrong we do him is proportionably heightened. It is no less certain that of all the external advantages and comforts of human life, there are none of greater importance to a man than a good name. (2) Besides

defrauding a man of reputation and honour, this crime is for the most part highly injurious and prejudicial to him with respect to his other interests, and very often proves an injury to the public. For, as Plutarch well observes, the reputation of honour and worth affords one a thousand opportunities of doing good in the world, by opening to him an easy passage to the hearts and affections of men; whereas, says he, if a man lie under any calumnies or suspicions, he cannot exert his virtues, be he never so well qualified, to the benefit of others, without committing a kind of violence upon them. (8) That which heightens the injustice of this crime the more, is, that it is so difficult to make the injured party any reparation. A scandal, when it is once gone abroad, is not easily recalled; but as a poisonous vapour sometimes infects a whole city or region, so a calumny, once set forward, and meeting with so general an inclination to provoke it, is not only apt to spread itself wide, but the further it spreads, the more it usually increases its malignity. 3. The impudence of those who are guilty of this crime. (1) There are few persons who give their tongues a general liberty of scandal and defamation that do not irritate others to take the same freedom with them. (2) The folly and imprudence of this vice of evil speaking appears further from hence, that it seldom if ever answers one great end we propose to ourselves by it. We are apt to imagine that by lessening or throwing dirt upon other people, we set ourselves off to greater advantage, and appear in a better light; but we ought to consider the world has, at that very moment, an eye upon our conduct, and the same right to make a judgment of it, as we have to sit upon the actions of other people. And that it will judge of us, not from our declaiming against their vices or defects, and the elevation we would thereby give ourselves above them; but from our personal qualifications or behaviour. (3) Persons who give themselves the liberty to reflect upon the criminal actions and behaviour of other people, or to charge them perhaps with crimes they never thought of, are frequently observed to speak their own inclinations, and to give some visible and plain hints what they themselves would have been disposed to do under the same circumstances of temptation. II. THE PROPER METHOD OF MAKING THIS RESOLUTION GOOD. 1. To take heed to our ways implies in general that we keep a strict and watchful eye upon all our actions, that we frequently examine and call them over, and impartially state accounts between God and our own consciences. 2. But I shall consider this expression in its more restrained sense, as it imports the great duty of self-reflection or examination. A duty which, if we discharge with that care and frequency we ought, we shall have less time and less inclination to concern ourselves about the failings or disorders of other people. (1) We shall have less time for this criminal amusement; because, by calling our own ways frequently to remembrance, we shall discover how many opportunities of religious improvement we have trifled away already, or perhaps abused to very wicked and irreligious purposes; and that it concerns us therefore, by a more strict and constant application to the duties of religion for the future, to use our utmost endeavours towards redeeming the time. (2) By frequently examining into the state of our own souls, we shall also have less inclination to censure the conduct of others. By considering how apt we ourselves are to be tempted, and how easily we have been overcome by temptation, we shall be disposed to make a more favourable judgment of the failings of other people; we shall think it unreasonable to expect that they should be perfect, while we are conscious to ourselves of so many personal defects; we shall be ashamed to condemn men of like passions for taking those liberties which we think excusable in ourselves. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. If evil speaking be, in general so heinous a sin, and on so many accounts injurious to the party spoken against, the guilt of it must still be increased, when such particular persons are defamed who bear any extraordinary character, or whose reputation is of greater influence; such as princes and civil magistrates that are put in authority under them, whose honour it is the common interest of society itself to support and maintain, because in proportion to any contempt or indignity offered to their persons, their authority itself will grow cheap and precarious. 2. From what has been said, we may observe the general decay of Christian piety. 3. If evil speaking be so heinous a crime, let us take care not only to avoid it ourselves, but to discountenance it in others. I must own there is some courage and resolution required to stem a torrent which runs so strong, and wherewith such multitudes are carried away; but the more general any sinful practice is, it is an argument of the greater bravery and generosity of mind to oppose it. But if we have not power enough

over ourselves to do that, let us take care, at least, that we be not thought by any seeming complacency in it, to encourage so unchristian a conversation. (*R. Fiddes.*)

Ver. 2. **I was dumb with silence.**—*Silence: sinful and sacred:*—Was David right in keeping silence "even from good"? Matthew Henry remarks, "Was it his wisdom that he refrained from good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness. The same law which forbids all corrupt communications requires that which is good to the use of edifying." Commendable virtues may be practised so eagerly as to degenerate into vices. Silence may indicate the greatest strength of character, or the greatest weakness. I. **TO BE DUMB WITH SILENCE MAY BE A GREAT SIN.** It often involves—1. Neglect of duty. Our tongues and voices were given us quite as much for the purpose of making vocal the praises of God, as to hold converse with one another. Shall we be so indebted to God for all His mercies and never render to Him our praise? Nature is ever vocal with adorations to our King. His praise finds expression on every hand. The birds warble it, in deep bass the seas roar it, the stars shine it, the flowers with sweet perfume breathe it, mighty winds and gentle zephyrs chant it, spring, summer, autumn, winter, are four choristers from which ascend but four parts of one glad anthem. And yet how often man remains dumb with guilty silence amid the myriad harmonious voices around him. We are often silent, also, when we should speak for God. We fear to confess Him though He calls upon us to be His witnesses. Oh, that you could feel the sin of your reticence; the criminality of sealed lips! A silent religion, or a speaking religion, Christian professor, which shall it be? 2. The permission afforded us of speaking for Christ should be looked upon in the light of a high privilege as well as a solemn duty. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 3. Our sinful silence often involves a loss of personal blessing. II. **BUT SILENCE IS OFTEN A VIRTUE.** When David was overwhelmed with a sense of God's mercy as expressed in Nathan's message (2 Sam. vii. 18), his sense of obligation to God was so great, that he felt his soul big with emotions to which he could scarce give expression, so he "sat before the Lord," overpowered with the weight of blessing. Have not we often felt our souls tremulous with an adoration our lips could not express? When we have sought fellowship with our Lord in His sufferings and mused upon His "unknown agonies." The silent growth and secret development of character is most acceptable to God. Many Christians are yielding Him greater praise by the silent yet mighty influence of a sanctified character, than others who are loud in talk yet less circumspect in life. All growth is silent. The tree rises year by year without any noise. Contrast the building of the tower of Babel and that of the temple, which, "Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung." Think, too, of silent prayer; and of sweet and gracious submission. How exalted is that Christian's attainment who can be silent while man persecutes. To me no portion of the story of our Saviour's life on earth is more convincing in its proof of His Deity than His submission to His cruel persecutors—"When reviled, He reviled not again; when buffeted, He threatened not." Here is Divinity indeed. Omnipotence restrains omnipotence. Let us seek grace to imitate Him. (*W. Williams.*)

Ver. 3. **While I was musing the fire burned.**—*The place of feeling in religion:*—David was one who felt, thought and acted strongly. There were no neutral tints about him. And he felt that he needed to restrain himself, lest his strong feeling should hurry him into sin. Hence he said, "I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue," etc. But feeling is a thing to be desired. As with David, thinking often prompts it: the two should ever be in just proportion. But it is better to have too much than too little feeling. We cannot love an unfeeling man. The feeling heart is the most human as well as the most humane part of our humanity. But we admire it only when it leans upon a clear judgment, and is thereby controlled. But it is difficult to say which is the stronger force. Both should be found in religion. But we are to remember that some natures have small capacity for emotion, and we do wrong in that account to doubt their Christianity. It is a sad misconception to look upon emotion as salvation. Salvation rests upon our willing Lord. God forgives, although a man may never weep.

(J. D. Aitken.) *Quiet musing*:—I. LET US SAY SOMETHING IN PRAISE OF MUSING. We do not do much of this in these days. We prefer what is amusing to musing, by a great deal. But—1. It is well to muse on the things of God because thus we get the nutriment out of them. Mere hearing or reading without this will not serve. 2. It fixes the truth in the memory. If we would have truth photographed upon our hearts, we must keep it long before the spiritual lens. 3. It leads us into the secrets of truth. 4. It ministers joy. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." 5. And it becomes easier by practice. A man has never a slack hand or a cold heart who is much in meditation. It is a blessed art. II. PUT SOME FUEL ON THE FIRE OF MEDITATION. How many are the topics which might be suggested. Eternal love. Dying love. Salvation. Heaven. Hell. And to you who are unregenerate I would urge your musing on your present state. What your end must be if you continue as you are. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beware lest the day come when thou wilt have to muse without hope. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Man musing, burning, speaking*:—I. THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE. 1. Thought. "While I was musing." What a wonderful power is the power of thought! (1) By thought man can turn the universe to his service. (2) By thought man can rise to the Creator, rise to some knowledge of Him, resemblance to Him, fellowship with Him. (3) By thought he can regulate his own destiny. By it he can change his character. Thought is the helmsman of the soul. 2. Moral emotion. "The fire burned." It was the fire of moral feeling. All the sentient existences we know of have some kind of feeling, but man alone has moral feeling—feeling in relation to sin, to duty, and to God. This feeling is kindled by thought. 3. Speech. "I spake." What a wonderful power is the power of speech. By it we reveal ourselves, we achieve conquests over souls, and win them to our wishes and our ways. How great is man! II. THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE. But how is this fire to be kindled? Here is the method. By musing. Upon the inconvenience of sin, its consequences, or its punishment? Thought must dwell upon God's mercy, not merely in nature and providence, but in the mission, sufferings, and death of God's only begotten Son. III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRUE ELOQUENCE. "While I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue." When is the tongue eloquent? 1. When it is used as a relief to the soul. 2. When it is used as a vehicle of strongest moral emotions. Moral emotions are electric. (*Homilist*.) *Motives*:—When we witness the performance of a noble deed, when we become acquainted with a noble character, when we read the life of a great and good man, we are tempted to ascribe his superiority, in great measure at least, to a difference of circumstances. "He has had facilities, incentives, motives," we are apt to say, "such as have not fallen to the lot of most men. Give us the same facilities, give us the same incentives and motives to virtue, and we should be glad to do as he has done." Undoubtedly there is a sense in which this is true. He has felt motives which we have not. But why has he felt them? To answer this question, we must begin by answering several others on which it depends. What are motives? The motive, externally considered, is the reason for acting or not acting, in a particular way; which, of course, will be attended to very differently by different persons, and so affect them very differently. Let us next consider what gives efficacy to one motive over another in particular cases? It is not enough that the quality exists; the individual must feel, must perceive that it exists, or else to him it does not exist. And now we are prepared to take up the third question. Why is it, that while one man is alive to the higher motives of human conduct, another is alive only to the lower motives? Something doubtless is attributable to difference of organization and temperament, but not the whole. If it were, how should we be able to account for material and essential changes in moral and religious sensibility, which the same individual often undergoes? In the case of repentance, involving a real change of heart, it will hardly be pretended that this alters a man's organization or temperament; and yet how entirely it alters his sensibility to moral and religious motives. These motives were always before him; but he did not see them, or at least he did not feel them, as he does now. In this respect he differs from his former self, just as all good men differ from all bad men; nevertheless, organically considered, he is the same man he always has been. So likewise of acquired habits, considered as predisposing men to be affected by certain motives. Why is it that motives have more influence over the mind in proportion as it is in any way predisposed to be affected by them? The chief, if not the sole reason, is, that such a mind gives them more attention and thought, enters into them more fully and entirely as realities, returns to them more

frequently, and dwells upon them to the exclusion of other things. Hence it follows, that earnest attention to the highest motives of human conduct awakens the best affections of the soul; and again, it is only by renewing this attention from day to day that these affections are kept alive and rendered more and more intense. In the words of the text: "While I was musing the fire burned." For this reason the Scriptures everywhere lay great stress on meditation and holy contemplation, on communing with God and our own souls, and having our conversation in heaven, as the conditions of "newness of life." Taking this principle along with us, we shall not find much difficulty in explaining some of the greatest perplexities of the Christian life. In the first place, it will help us to define, with sufficient distinctness at least for all practical purposes, the office of free will. Whatever may be true in theory, there can be no doubt that, in practice, we are generally disappointed, when we expect a great deal from man's self-determining power. The reason is, not that this power does not exist, but that it is not applied at the right time, and in the right place. Again, the same principle will help to explain why it is, that when men become decidedly religious it is often in consequence of some startling or impressive event—the death of a friend, a remarkable escape, a pungent discourse, a striking remark, a dream, a thought. It may be said that such an occurrence does not add one iota to the number or the strength of the motives to a Christian life which these persons had, and which they knew they had, before. And this is true; but it calls attention to those motives; and this, as we have seen, is all that was wanted. Once more, the view here taken of the manner in which men become alive to the highest motives will also account satisfactorily for local and temporary excitements in morals and religion. These are sometimes referred to sympathy and imitation, and even to causes less pure. Much of what is transient in them, and many of the attendant circumstances, are doubtless to be explained in this way; but not the whole. What is real and lasting in these movements has its origin in the general attention to the subject which, somehow or other, has been awakened. It is not pretended that any new motives are discovered or invented. Let me, then, revert once more to the plea so often set up by the undevout, the indifferent, the worldly-minded: to wit, that they do not feel the motives to virtue and piety which good men do. The fact is admitted; but when we come to analyze it, we find that, in most cases at least, it turns out to be, not an excuse, but a part of the wrong. As we have seen, they do not distinguish, they do not believe, they do not feel because they do not attend. But attention is pre-eminently a voluntary act, and one, therefore, in respect to which all are pre-eminently free and responsible. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *The uses of solitude*.—The subject of solitude has been a favourite theme for romantic declamation and sentimental insipidity; and, on this account, many sensible people are inclined to avoid it. It will but be doing justice to its real importance and dignity, to state its connection with some of our highest duties, and its influence over our most spiritual affections; to speak of it in seriousness and simplicity, as a necessary discipline of the mental faculties, as a valuable monitor of our real situation and destiny, as a choice opportunity for impartial self-examination, profitable reflection, and heavenly communion. I. AS A PREPARATIVE FOR SOCIETY AND FOR ACTION. 1. It is so, in one respect, simply as it furnishes repose to weariness. We return to our work with more vigour when our flagging forces have had time to recover their spring, and our ebbing spirits have received a new supply of sustenance and force. The attractions of deserted things are renewed; a fresh impulse is given to the race, and a fresh beauty to the prize. 2. But our capacity of duty is not merely animated by an addition of power; it is enlarged by the acquisition of knowledge. We see the world at an advantage, as it were, when we see it as spectators, and not as actors. We can observe with more exactness the passions which agitate the bosoms of men when we ourselves are without the reach of their influence. We can trace with more precision their actions to their motives, when we are standing aloof, and can take in, as from an eminence, both the fountain and the stream. 3. Yet in another way are we fitted by solitude to go back again into society, better qualified than before for its duties and demands. We are made more kind, more gentle, more forbearing. 4. We are taught, also, in the seasons of occasional solitude, a more correct knowledge of ourselves than we should otherwise possess. We are thus in the way of exercising more candour in the scrutiny of our neighbour's opinions, feelings and actions, and more diffidence in the defence of our own. II. AS FAVOURABLE TO THE MOST EXALTED FEELINGS OF DEVOTION. 1. Man holds the most intimate communion with his Maker when no being but

his Maker is near him. The most fervent aspirations of his heart rise up from the temple of solitude; for they rise up without witness, without restraint, and without contamination. 2. Solitude is favourable to devotion because its tendency is to render devotion consistent, rational and ennobling. When we are alone with God, we see Him with a clearer vision, and seem to be endowed with a more intimate perception of His character. We draw nearer to His presence, and drink more directly and copiously of His Spirit. III. ITS TENDENCY TO INSPIRE SERIOUS REFLECTIONS ON THE GREAT CONCERNS OF EXISTENCE—LIFE, DEATH, ETERNITY. 1. There is something in the essential vigour, and the regenerated freshness, and the long duration of natural objects, which often impresses us most forcibly with a feeling of the shortness and uncertainty of our own earthly existence. No sentiment offers itself more naturally to him who meditates alone among the silent works of God, than that they are renewing their strength while he is wearing away, and that they will remain when he is gone. The sun seems to say to him, I shall rise in splendour, and set in glory; and the moon, I shall walk on in my brightness; and the hills, We shall abide in our majesty; and the streams, We shall flow in all our fullness—when thou shalt be no longer known to us, nor numbered with us. The intimation is melancholy, but it is not unkind, nor is it received unkindly—for the voice of Nature is not as the voice of men. It is always a sound of soothing and sympathy, and never of contempt or indifference. 2. It remains to point out a connection between thoughts of this nature, and a source still higher. When we are engaged in secret communion with that eternal Being in whose hands our life and breath are, and whose are all our ways, we are necessarily reminded of our own frailty and dependence, of the brevity of our mortal term, and of our deep responsibility. (F. W. P. Greenwood.)

Ver. 4. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.—*A sense of our frailty a subject for prayer*:—Bishop Horsley says that David, moved by a godly contrition, pours forth this prayer, that he might know his end and the measure of his days. I. WHY SHOULD CONTRITION LEAD TO SUCH A PRAYER? David speaks not of forgiveness, though that is what the contrite heart first asks for. But he does not here pray even for this. Apparently he does not, but really he does. For the prayer to be taught how frail we are, is virtually a prayer that we may be made holier, more averse from sin, and more devoted to the great end of our being. That it is this is shown—1. By the fact that the interval between the evil work and the execution of the sentence against it causes the hearts of men to be steadfastly set in them to do evil. If penalty followed immediately on crime, men would not dare to sin as now they fearlessly do. They trust themselves to the hope that delay in punishment ever inspires. There is a sort of unacknowledged idea that what is protracted and indefinite will never take effect. A thousand things may intervene to prevent execution. 2. Or there is at work another, and not wholly different feeling. It is confessed that sin must be repented and forsaken, seeing that otherwise there will come a fearful retribution hereafter; but it is imagined that life will yet afford many opportunities, so that it is safe, or at least not imminently dangerous, to persist a while longer in criminal indulgence, which keeps up the sinner in this his procrastination. If you could practically overthrow this his theory, and substitute for it the persuasion, that "in the midst of life he is in death," he would be almost compelled, by his felt exposure to danger, to make provision for the coming eternity, on the threshold of which he may be at any moment standing, and which may be upon him, in its awfulness and unchangeableness, ere he draw another breath. How many still believe the ancient lie with which the tempter deceived Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." How few live "as strangers and pilgrims" here on earth. Instead of that there is a great settling themselves down, as if earth were their home; a slackness in religious duties, as if there were no great cause for diligence; a deferring of many sacrifices and performances, as though the case were not urgent; and this, too, where the parties not only avouch themselves careful for the soul, but are clearly to be distinguished from the great mass around them, by a general endeavour to do the will of their God. And what should we say is needed, in order to the correcting these errors and inconsistencies? What, at least, would be a mighty engine in producing greater steadfastness in the righteous, greater abstraction from earth, greater devotedness to religion? We reply without hesitation—a deep conviction of the

uncertainty of life. Had men such conviction they could not live, as now they do, so entangled in the world, so eager in its service. It would warn him back from the inordinate pursuit of earthly things. II. But note **THE PETITION ITSELF**. What a curious fact it is that such a petition should be offered unto God. Its terms are explicit enough, at least there can be little doubt as to its drift. He does not mean that God should show him the exact measure of his days and the precise number of them he had yet to live. Such a petition would be unlawful, for it would be an intrusion into those "secret things" which "belong only unto God." But that which the psalmist seeks to know is, the frailty of his life. This is the drift and scope of the petition, that he may have an abiding sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life. Now, is it not strange that such a prayer should be offered? I do not ask God to make me know that such and such substances are poisonous when all example testifies that they are; or that the weather is variable, when I have such continual proof of it. I do not pray to know anything, which I know indubitably from books, or testimony, or observation. Why, then, pray to be made to know how frail I am? It seems like praying to be made to know that the sun rises and sets; that storms may suddenly overcast the sky, or that any other thing may happen which we already know is wont to happen. And yet David, who was as little likely as we are to shut his eyes to well-known truths—he offers up this prayer, "Lord, make me to know mine end," etc. I cannot but draw a lesson from this for one's own ministerial guidance in the discharge of the ministerial office. If there is one thing more than another I would desire to have impressed on all classes of my hearers, it is the simple, self-evident, universally confessed truth, that they are frail beings liable at any moment to death, and certain at no very distant time to be removed to another, even to an invisible world. I have already shown you that there is little needed, beyond the abiding consciousness of this truth, to produce in those who have hitherto neglected religion, an earnest heedfulness to the things of eternity; and in others, who have devoted themselves to God, an increased and increasing diligence in the culture of personal holiness. So that it will naturally be one great aim of the minister to gain power for the truth of the uncertainty of life; to withdraw it from the mass of facts, which are acknowledged rather than felt, and to place it amongst those which influence the conduct. How is he to proceed in the accomplishment of this aim? You know very well what is ordinarily tried; and if reason sit in judgment on the matter, it might possibly pronounce it best fitted to succeed. There are arrayed all the affecting evidences that can be gathered together of human frailty. But, however fair and admirable in theory, is this course practically effective when the fact of which we desire to produce conviction is the uncertainty of life? Alas! no. The universal testimony from ministerial experience, is that a well wrought sermon on the frailty of life is commonly ineffectual to the making men on the watch for the approaches of death. Here it is that our text comes in with a great lesson. It does but echo this result of ministerial experience. The psalmist prays to be made to know his frailty; as though quite aware that meditation and observation would never bring it home to him, notwithstanding that it seemed impossible for him to shut his eyes to the fact. And if it be a thing for prayer, it is evident enough that all meditations amongst the tombs, and all musings over the dead, will be practically of no avail, except as they bring men to their knees. Here, then, is the great lesson which, as a minister, I gather from the text. I wish to impress on you your frailty, and entreat you to let this be part of your daily prayer to the Almighty—"Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *Reflections for the New Year*.—I. **THAT HUMAN LIFE MUST TERMINATE**. The knowledge and belief that our times are in God's hand have a powerful influence in making us humble, self-denied, watchful and holy. The return of day and night, the revolution of the heavenly bodies, the beating of our hearts, the circulation of the blood, every clock in our chamber, and every watch we carry, all proclaim the affecting truth, that our days are hastening to an end. II. **THAT THE MEASURE OF OUR DAYS IS DETERMINED BY GOD**. The sovereignty of the Most High is eminently discovered in the various admeasurements of human life. III. **THAT THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR END, AND OF THE MEASURE OF OUR DAYS IS OF GREAT PRACTICAL UTILITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**. "That I may know how frail I am." IV. **THAT GOD ALONE CAN TEACH US THE END, THE MEASURE, AND THE VALUE OF THE PRESENT LIFE**. "Lord, make me to know mine end," etc. This is a lesson which the wisdom of men cannot teach. We hear, we



confess the general truth that all must die; but we act as if it were not true, as if it never were to be interpreted of ourselves! But when God teaches us our end, He inspires us with other views. No person can be indifferent to death and mortality when God is his teacher. (*Christian Magazine*.) "Make me to know mine end":—From this prayer it would appear that men are prone to forget their end. Why do men forget their last end? I. **NEGATIVELY**. 1. Not because there can be any doubt as to its importance. What a momentous event is death! The termination of our earthly connection, and our introduction into a state, mysterious, retributive, probably unalterable. 2. Not because men have no reminders of it. If you see a painting, the artist is in his grave—a book, the author is no more—a portrait, the subject is gone to dust. 3. Not because there is the slightest hope of avoiding it. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." II. **POSITIVELY**. 1. An instinctive repugnance to it. All men dread it. 2. The difficulty of realizing it. We cannot possibly know what it is to die. It is a knowledge that can only be got by experience. 3. The commonness of the occurrence. If only a few in a whole country died in the course of a year, and one or two in our neighbourhood, the strangeness might affect us. 4. The general hope of longevity. 5. The soul engrossing power of worldly things. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" This is the all absorbing question. But why should men consider their latter end? (1) To moderate their attachment to earthly things. (2) To stimulate preparation for a higher state. (3) To enable us to welcome it when it comes. (*Homilist*.) *Brief life is here our portion*:—Some see a kind of pettishness in this verse, the fruit of impatience under the chastening hand of God. But it is not for us to upbraid the psalmist, for what is his impatience compared to ours? David prays, "Make me to know mine end." But was his frailty a secret that he could not discover? We may be sure that he knew it in part, but he wanted to know it after a more perfect way; with that spiritual enlightenment which God alone could communicate. Thus he would know—I. **HIS END**. Do we know this? 1. Its certainty. I must die. There is no discharge in that war. Is that fact realized by us? 2. It will be our end. Not a halt, but a finale. Mine end for all things beneath the sun—sin, sorrow, service, opportunity for doing and getting good. Think of the accompaniments of our end, the last scenes here in which we shall take part. Picture it all to your minds so far as you can. Rehearse it so far as you may. And think of its results. Then it is that though we end here, we enter on the most solemn part of our existence. Whither wilt thou go? To be with Christ, or amongst the lost—which? We need to be made to know our end, made to believe in it firmly, realize it vividly, so as to be prepared for it whenever it comes. II. **THE MEASURE OF HIS DAYS**. It is only the days of God that cannot be counted. Ours can, "as poor men count their sheep," because they are so few. But the fact that man is sinful makes it blessed that his days should be few. Would we have a Voltaire for ever stalking about this world, or such as he? Let us measure our days so as not to waste them. III. **HIS FRAILTY**. We are like travellers on a road across which there is a deep gulf. Some know it, but most forget it. Those in the front ranks fall into it, and the others will, but as yet they think not of it. So we all go on until we come to that fatal step which will plunge us into eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon*.)

Ver. 5. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth: and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.—*The brevity and vanity of human life*:—These simple words have an energy in them which none but a dying man can fully understand. We may, indeed, have felt something of their meaning, as we have heard them read over the corpse of a beloved friend, but then this feeling has been neither deep nor lasting. The cares or pleasures of the world have again called for and had our whole attention. The psalmist's words lead us to consider—I. **WHY HE CALLS THE DAYS OF LIFE OUR DAYS**. Strictly speaking, they are not so, not one of them, but—1. They bring to us innumerable mercies as they hurry on. 2. And they are allowed to us that in them we may work for eternity. 3. We have to account for them hereafter. They are recorded in the Book of God. II. **THEIR SHORTNESS**. They are so by comparison. 1. With the period once allotted to the life of man. 2. With the duration of many objects around us. 3. With the eternity of God. 4. With the work we have to do. How diligent, then, should we be. And how silently our years pass away. There is also another painful thought connected with the silent rapidity of time—the longer we stay in the world, the swifter does

its flight appear. A year to a man is not more than a few months to a child. Our days seem to rush on with a more silent and rapid motion the nearer they draw to the goal of death, as though they were eager to bear us away unawares to our destined eternity. The fact is, that time, correctly speaking, is nothing more than a succession of ideas; these ideas are less numerous, and the impressions they make less deep and permanent in old age than they are in youth; and consequently the road of life has fewer marks to remind us of our progress.

III. **THEIR VANITY.** But here, perhaps, it may be said, "What if the period of life is thus transitory? Man is a great and noble being, and has powers that enable him to crowd into this short existence a consequence and dignity suited to his greatness." The words before us however speak no such language. There is another truth declared in them, which pours contempt on all human greatness. They tell us, not only of the shortness of life, but of the vanity, the utter nothingness, of man. This is the testimony they give, "Verily, every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity." Therefore—I. How precarious and how little worth are all our earthly blessings. Death soon carries them away. 2. And so of all our schemes and prospects. How forcibly, then, are we reminded of the great duty of consideration, of serious thoughts on our life and responsibility; how great an evil is sin, and how great a necessity is our trust in God. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

*The vanity of man at his best state:*—I. **THE SUBJECT OF THE PSALMIST'S MEDITATION.** "Every man in his best state." How glorious was the condition in which man was created. But from that he fell. Still, through God's mercy in Christ, his condition is one of many blessings. He may have the Divine favour, and he may dwell in the Divine presence here. But the psalmist was thinking of man in the state in which he possesses the greatest share of worldly advantages, and in which other men are wont to call him most happy. Picture such a man—the citizen, the philosopher, the monarch. II. **HEAR WHAT IS SAID OF SUCH AN ONE, the humiliating fact that he is "altogether vanity."** For death at any moment may come and strike down the sturdiest frame, the possessor of the greatest prosperity. Remember this, and prepare for the eternal life. III. **THE EMPHATIC MANNER IN WHICH IT IS URGED ON OUR ATTENTION.** "Verily," every man at, etc., etc. And we need that the truth should be enforced, manifest and common as it is. (*W. Curling, M.A.*)

*The vanity of man:*—I. **Man's existence WITHOUT IMMORTALITY IS VANITY.** 1. It is vain in the sense of hollowness. It is an empty fiction, an inflated bubble. (1) It lacks inner satisfaction. (2) It lacks endurance. 2. It is vain in the sense of worthlessness. On the assumption that there is no immortality, what useful purpose is answered by our existence? I appreciate the literary productions of genius, but the best of them I feel are unworthy of our creation. II. **Man's existence WITH A GODLESS IMMORTALITY IS VANITY.** 1. It is an existence eternally pursuing a phantom. 2. It is an existence eternally producing injury. Learn—(1) The infinite worth of the Gospel. (2) The infinite folly of the Gospel-rejector. (*Homilist.*)

*The brief duration of human life:*—I. **Life is short, IN RESPECT OF THE GREAT WORK WHICH IT IS GIVEN US TO PERFORM.** Man in his best estate here below is still an improvable condition. There is no perfection on this side the grave. 1. The man of the loftiest attainments in virtue is but elevated to a position whence he has a more enlarged discovery than others of the miserableness and defects of his present standing. The attainments of man in virtue and in piety affect him in a manner similar to what is produced by the other acquirements of life—the more that there is gained, the more is there that presents itself to be desired. The Christian, in his best estate, ever feels clogged in his career, and is ever laying aside those weights which retard him in his motion. 2. As it is with the attainments of piety, so is it with those of knowledge. The longest life is found too short to compass the knowledge of what God has revealed to us in His Word. To some, the duration of mortal existence has proved too short for the attainment of any substantial good. They were cut off in the midst of resolutions of amendment. For this, life was amply sufficient; but, as Seneca has it, "We complain of its shortness, because of the waste of it which is made." II. **Life is short IN A COMPARATIVE POINT OF VIEW; and it is in reference to the consideration of the subject in this light, that the comparison in our text of life to an hand-breadth is peculiarly appropriate.** 1. To the child in the dawn of life, when reason begins to expand, and thought to measure out the prospect of happy days spread before it, through all the stages of its earthly career, the anticipated term of years appear so vast as to fill its imagination with wonder, and rack its powers of comprehension. But, with the progress of years, the allotted term of human life

ever appears to shorten. 2. But when the psalmist said, "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth," he must have thought of the Eternal of ages, whom he addressed, with whom "a thousand years are as one day," and compared with whose immeasurable duration our existence here may well be likened to an handbreadth. "Our days" is a phrase employed in Scripture to denote the term of our existence here, which is measured by the revolution of days, contrasted with our future being, when time shall be no longer. The psalmist thought of the great, the boundless eternity which lay before him; of that never-ending succession of ages through which we should live, increasing in knowledge and in happiness; and turning his eye to the comparatively puny, limited, and circumscribed being which he now enjoyed, yet considering the vast result that hung upon it, he exclaimed, "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth." Such language is appropriate to human life. We have received a place among the things which have foundation. Our immortal souls exist in God, who has imparted to them, in reference to futurity, an attribute to Himself—Eternity. (*John Watson.*) *The vanity of human life and nature.*—I. THE FORCE AND EMPHASIS OF THE TEXT.

1. The psalmist gives us here a very emphatic description of the measure of his days. (1) "A handbreadth," or the breadth of four fingers was one of the least geometrical measures among the Jews; which we may fitly call an inch or two of time. But alas! the thread of life is as slender as it is short; and often breaks before this inch or two is run off. (2) The psalmist speaks of it in yet more diminishing terms when he adds, "My age is as nothing before Thee." 2. The psalmist gives us a much more diminishing description of the frailty of our nature than he does of the measure of our days. For, "verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (1) He is so in himself, both in body and mind. His body is but a living lump of earth, making haste to deformity and dust. How feeble, contracted and low, are the very best powers of his mind; how weak his reason, how cramped his understanding! (2) His pursuits and desires are vain. (3) His enjoyments are vain—riches, pleasures, honours. (4) His life is vain—transient, short, uncertain. II. WHY OUR COMMON SENTIMENTS OF HUMAN LIFE ARE SO VERY DIFFERENT FROM THESE OF THE PSALMIST. 1. Men do not steadily attend to the nature, consequence, and final issue of things; but confine their views to present objects and appearances, which are sure to deceive them. 2. Sense and appetite too often corrupt the judgment. It is a hard thing for men to believe what they would not have to be true. The truth is, their affections are engaged, and they cannot help thinking well of what they love; they do not care to hear those things disparaged which they exceedingly value; nor can they be easily persuaded to think that what they have fondly set their hearts upon is so altogether vain. III. WE SHALL SOON BE CONVINCED OF THE JUSTNESS OF THIS DESCRIPTION if we but duly consider two things. 1. What man is in comparison of what he shall be. Do we not look upon one single moment of time as a mere point, when compared with the many years we have already lived? But one single moment of time bears an infinitely greater proportion to the period of human life than the whole period of human life does to eternity. How concerned, then, should we be by a course of steady piety and virtue to add a value to this nothing, by improving our transient years to the purposes of eternal bliss! Because on this moment of time depends eternity. 2. We shall be more sensible of the justness of this description which the psalmist gives us of the vanity of mankind, if we consider in what manner they generally act in comparison of what they should do. (1) In what manner they ought to live as reasonable creatures in a state of trial and preparation for an eternal world. Impressed with this thought, would they not be very careful to watch their heart and behaviour, and daily examine their temper and conduct by that rule of righteousness which God hath given them for their direction and guide; lest they should be unawares seduced into sin, to the danger and detriment of their immortal interest? (2) Do we find that they really do live in this manner? Is not the general course and conduct of their lives often just the reverse of this? How rarely are they disposed to think of another world! How unattentive to the government of their lives and passions! IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Seeing we know these things, let us beware lest we also be led away with the error of the wicked. 2. The text, if well considered, must surely be a sovereign cure for envy; unless vanity, folly, and wretchedness be the proper objects of it. 3. Is man in his best state altogether vanity? what is he, then, in his worst state? 4. Let us learn hence to rectify our sentiments of human life and all its vanities. (1) What do we think of them under a grievous fit of pain or sickness? When all of them together

cannot purchase for us so much as one moment's ease. (2) What should we think of them at death? It is then that men always form the truest thoughts of human life. (3) Suppose we were to judge of them by the general character of those who possess the most of them; and see the pernicious effects they generally have upon the minds of men; what shall we think of them then? 5. Are these things really vain; it is time, then, that we seek out for some more substantial good. (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *Of vanity*:—Take man in all the variety of his behaviour and humours, in his best and most settled estate (for so much the original imports); nay, in the best managements of his affairs, in the subtilty and strength of all his designs and projectings; even in the pre-eminence of his reason and pretended excellency of his wisdom; when he designs to look and speak wisest, and put off the face of vanity; when he thinks he is most in the right, and his achievements are most successful; take him with all his advantages, and dress him up above nature, with all the improvements of art and sciences, and he is still the veriest fop in the creation, and the merest antic that appears upon the stage of the world. I. CONSIDER MAN IN HIS CIVIL AND SECULAR CAPACITY. The greatest confidence that men usually have in the things of the world arises from a great estate of wealth and treasure. But what is the foundation of this confidence, but a greater portion of the earth we tread on, or some refined part of it, some rubbish taken out of its bowels, burnished and made shining (to please the fool), and stamped with some image and superscription. But observe the vanity; are we children when we play with trifles, and wise men when we please ourselves with these greater toys? Or rather to confirm our vanity, are we not like them, given to change, and throw away one foolery to take up another? The difference can be no more than that the one is the pleasure and divertisement of children, and the other of men; but both the same vanity. II. EXAMINE HIM AS TO HIS MORAL AND DIVINE ESTATE, as he is the son and disciple of virtue, and wisdom, and religion; as he is guided by reason, and pretendedly governed by conscience; there, too, he is vanity. 1. The original dignity of man above other creatures is that he is endowed with a rational soul, a pure immaterial substance that cannot die or be extinguished; by this he claims kindred with the angels, nay, a certain affinity to God Himself, being created after His image, and cannot but think immortality essential to his very being; but, alas! to invert the words of the apostle, this immortal may put on mortality, and this incorruptible may put on corruption. 2. If we venture a strain higher, even to the best effects of reason; to the high-flown pretences of wisdom and learning, we shall make much the same discoveries. The wisdom of men is not only foolishness with God, but really in itself; and knowledge is as truly but science falsely so called. III. TO FIX UPON A STATE AND CONDITION OF LIFE REALLY THE BEST AND THE ONLY ONE NOT SUBJECT TO VANITY IS EASY, AND IN FEW WORDS TO BE DISCOVERED, IN CONTEMPLATION AT LEAST, THOUGH EXPERIENCE HATH PROVED THE PRACTICE TO BE VERY RARE AND DIFFICULT. If we should meet and confer together, and discourse this great point one with another in the next world, some little space before our trial comes on at that great tribunal of God, what, I pray, would you call wisdom? What would you call exemption from vanity and folly? Be sure not that by which in the preceding world we got a great estate; for, alas! that is quite gone and lost to us and our posterity, nothing of that nature can escape the general conflagration. No! nor that by which we once got fame and renown, for that is vanished too, and perhaps is really inglorious and base in the esteem of all at that day; for then be sure our judgments will be more discerning, and we shall have other thoughts and apprehensions of things. No! nor that by which we attained to arts and sciences, were statesmen or politicians; for we shall have no manner of use of them, neither in heaven nor in hell. Our knowledge must, then, be of another nature, of much greater perfection, or we cannot be happy; and sinner, too, the more sagacious and discerning they then become, the more fitted and qualified (as we may say) will they be for their due punishment; their remorse and torments will be the sorer and more pungent. We shall infallibly then pronounce upon the debate, That we were altogether vain in the other world, and that that was the truest wisdom which exerted itself in all the provisional means for this great and terrible day of judgment, to secure the grand interest of everlasting life. (*John Cooke, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain show.—*The bitterness and blessedness of the brevity of life* (with ver. 12):—These two sayings are two different ways of putting the same thing. There is a common thought underlying both, but the associations with which that common thought is connected in these two verses are

distinctly different. The one is bitter and sad—a gloomy half truth. The other, out of the very same fact, draws blessedness and hope. The one may come from no higher point of view than the level of worldly experience, the other is a truth of faith. The former is at best partial, and without the other may be harmful; the latter completes, explains, and hallows it. And this progress and variety is the key to the whole psalm. The writer, in consequence of some personal calamity—we know not what—was struck dumb with silence. His thoughts were sad and miserable. At last he speaks out, and complains more than prays concerning the deep sadness of life. He dilates on this, but the thought of it alone is too dreadful: the blackness of his view was making him reel; therefore he turns to God, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee." The psalm changes from this point; there is the same sadness contemplated, but with what a difference. He sees the bright light of hope which streams up from the most lurid masses of opaque cloud till their gloom begins to glow with an inward lustre, and softens into solemn purples and reds. He had said, "I was dumb with silence—even from good." But when his hope is in God, the silence changes its character and becomes resignation and submission. He is a stranger, but "with Thee"—that makes all the difference. He is God's guest in his transient life. That life is short, like the stay of a foreigner in a strange land, but he is under the care of the King of the land; therefore he need not fear nor sorrow. Three points are brought before us. I. THE THOUGHT OF LIFE COMMON TO BOTH VERSES OF THE TEXT. "Every man walketh in a vain show," and "in an image" or "shadow"—he walks as a shadow. That is to say, the whole outward life and activity of every man is represented as fleeting and unsubstantial, like the reflection of a cloud which darkens leagues of the mountain's side in a moment, and "ere a man can say, behold," is gone again for ever. Then look at the other image employed in the other clause of our text, to express the same idea, "I am a stranger and a sojourner as all my fathers." The phrase has a history. In that most pathetic narrative of an old-world sorrow long since calmed and consoled, when "Abraham stood up from before his dead" and craved a burying-place for Sarah from the sons of Heth, he pleaded, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." He was so. And such is man's relation to this world. II. THE GLOOMY HOLLOWNESS WHICH THAT THOUGHT APART FROM GOD INFUSES INTO LIFE. Because life is fleeting, therefore in part, it is so hollow and unsatisfying. Why should we fret and break our hearts, "and scorn delights, and live laborious days" for purposes which will last so short a time, and things which we shall so soon have to leave? "Were it not better to lie still?" Such thoughts have at least a partial truth in them, and are difficult to meet as long as we think only of the facts and results of man's life that we can see with our eyes. Yes! if we have said all, when we have said—men pass as a fleeting shadow, if my life has no roots in the eternal, nor any consciousness of a life that does not fade, then it is all flat and unprofitable, an illusion, a folly, a dream. For all the while I yearn for something higher, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." God "hath put eternity in man's heart," as Ecclesiastes says. And all these longings and aspirations witness that such limited life as was can never fill our souls or give us rest. Can you fill up the swamps of the Mississippi with any cartloads of faggots that you can fling in? Can you fill your souls with anything which belongs to this fleeting life? Has a flying shadow an appreciable thickness, or will a million of them pressed together occupy a space in your empty hungry heart? But note how our other text in its significant words gives us—III. THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH SPRINGS FROM THIS SAME THOUGHT OF LIFE WHEN IT IS LOOKED AT IN CONNECTION WITH GOD. The mere conviction of the brevity and hollowness of life is not in itself a religious or helpful thought. It all depends upon what you associate with it. The words, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with Thee," point back to the law of the jubilee, when all lands returned to their original owners. But its religious aim was to keep alive in the minds of Israel their sense of dependence upon God. "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. Of course, there was a special sense in which that was true with regard to Israel, but David thought that the words were as true in regard to his whole relation of God, as in regard to Israel's possession of its national inheritance. If we grasp these words as completing all that we have already said, how different this transient and unsubstantial life looks. You must have the light from both sides to stereoscope and make solid the flat surface picture. Transient! yes—but it is passed in the presence of God. Now, if we will hold to this truth, what calm blessedness will flow into our hearts.

For if "a stranger with Thee," then we are the guests of the King, the Lord of the land. We have a constant companion and an abiding presence. He is with us, will walk with us, will sit with us and make our hearts glow. Strangers we are, indeed, here—but not solitary, for we are "strangers with Thee." As in some ancestral home in which a family has lived for centuries—son after father has rested in these great chambers, and been safe behind the strong walls—so age after age, they who love Him abide in God. "Thou has been our dwelling-place in all generations." "Strangers with Thee"—then we may carry our thoughts forward to the time when we shall go to our true home, nor wander any longer in the land that is not ours. If even here He is with us, what will it be there? And why should we fear death? Is the sentry sad as the hour for relieving guard comes nigh? Is the wanderer in far-off lands sad as he turns his face homewards? And why should not we rejoice at the thought that we, strangers and foreigners here, shall soon depart to the true metropolis, the mother-country of our souls? I do not know why. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Earth's vanities and heaven's verities:—*

**I. DAVID RECORDS HIS VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE.** 1. He speaks of life as a walk. He seems to have had in his mind the idea of a great procession: "Surely every man walketh in a vain show." Such things were more common in Oriental countries than they are with us; but whether it is the Lord Mayor's show or any other, it is a picture of what this mortal life is. Among some classes of society, show is everything; they must "keep up appearances." Just so; and, all the world over, that is about all there is—"appearances"—a vain show. I wish we could get a hold of that idea as a practical thing, that everything we can see is shadow, but what we cannot see is the real substance. 2. He speaks of life as a worry. "Surely they are disquieted." So they are. How few people are so free from the spirit of the things of this world as to pass through this life quietly. See how they begin life, eager for its joys, its honours, its wealth. Note how they plod, and toil, and labour. How much of brain-work is done by the light of the midnight oil! Many a man agitates his mind, and wearies his spirit, till his life is lost in finding a livelihood. They are trying to live, and lo! life is gone; and they wake up, and wonder how it is that they have let it go, and have not really lived at all. 3. David passes on to speak of life as a success; and he mentions those who were supposed to have been successful in life; though, mark you, it is not success in life, after all, to accumulate riches. "He heapeth up riches." That is all. He does not partake of them, he does not use them, he merely heaps them up. He accumulates without enjoyment. "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." He leaves his wealth without pleasure. I am sure that there is many a man who would turn in his grave if he knew what was being done with his hard-earned wealth. **II. DAVID EXPRESSES HIS OWN EMOTIONS IN CONTEMPLATION OF THESE THINGS.** 1. He has come to a decision. "And now, Lord." I like that mode of speech; it is a great thing to come to God with a "now." Every moment is solemn if we would but make it so; but there are certain turning-points in life, when a man has had his eyes opened to see the fallacy of his former pursuits, when, stopping where the roads meet, he looks up to the signpost, and says, "And now, Lord, guide me; help me to take the right turn, to eschew the shadow, and to seek after that which is substantial. Now, Lord." 2. I also like this expression of David's emotions, because he consults with God: "Every man walketh in a vain show; but," saith he, "and now, Lord, there is no vanity with Thee, no deception, no delusion with Thee, behold, I turn away from this mirage, which just now deluded me, to Thee, my God, the Rock of my salvation, and I look to Thee. And now, Lord." 3. He is a man whose hope is in God. **III. DAVID OFFERS AN APPROPRIATE AND NEEDFUL PRAYER, "Deliver me," etc.—**1. From sins committed. 2. From the assaults of sin. 3. From peculiarly dangerous sins. 4. From deserved dishonour. 5. From undeserved defamation. 6. From spiritual disappointment. 7. From dreadful taunts at the last. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Surely they are disquieted in vain.—Vain disquietudes:—****I. BECAUSE THEY ARE UTTERLY USELESS.** Most, if not all, the things that occasion them are inevitable. 1. The approach of age. 2. The advance of reformation. 3. The separation from property. 4. The advent of death. **II. BECAUSE THEY ARE REMOVABLE.** Since Christianity has come, all the disquietudes of the soul may be hushed. They are kept in "perfect peace" whose minds are stayed upon God. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 7, 8. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.—*The appeal*

and prayer of a waiting soul:—I. HIS WAITING. 1. What he did not wait for—not for any earthly good. 2. What he did wait for—manifestation of love of God. Removal of affliction. The subdual of his sins. A smile from God. God's will to be done in him. II. HIS HOPE—God. III. HIS PRAYER—"Deliver me from all," etc.—1. From the guilt; 2. The filth; 3. The love; 4. The power; 5. The commission—of sin. IV. THE REPROACH WHICH HE FEARED—that of "the foolish." He knew he was liable to it, and he feared it much. (J. C. Philpot.) *Faith and culture*:—The latter of these two verses is the language of a man who had seen much of life. And yet we must own that the life of man is a fuller, a more intense, a more many-sided thing to-day than ever before. How many interests it touches; amid what wide-reaching complications it lives and moves; under what enormous pressure it rushes on. The age which we call our own is mainly an inventing and contriving one. In a word, for that is the question to which our text directly lead us, Is the world really happier because of what civilization has done for it, or no? No one will say that civilization has done nothing for the race, and that there has been no progress apart from that of the Cross. To affirm that would be to affirm what is untrue. For civilization may be without Christian faith. Enlightened selfishness has long found out that the individual is better off and happier when the community is honest, healthy and mutually self-respecting. Hence, it is not certain that society, as you and I know it, would lapse into barbarism without the knowledge of the faith of the Crucified. But the question is, also, Would human happiness remain? or rather, Is it to civilization that the world owes its happiness, and are we of to-day, with our higher and finer civilization, happier than our forefathers? They were without a multitude of advantages that we have, and the range and the pace of their life were almost infinitely narrower and slower. But in widening the range and in quickening the pace, have we deepened the current and enriched the quality of our lives? "Thou hast multiplied the nation," says the prophet, "and not increased the joy." And yet there is a Book which tells you of a life which he who lives it is "not afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast and believeth in the Lord." There is a faith which has learned how to ask and to answer the deepest of all questions in the word, "And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee." There is a life—you know at least one or two who here and there are living it—in which the world is neither a charnel-house, nor its pleasures dust and ashes. It is for this widening of the horizon of its life, that human society wants that message of faith which civilization does not and cannot bring it. Man is going to school here, and the things that he touches, and sees, and requires here, all these are simply toys with which he is building block-houses in the nursery, until he is fit for the life and employments of the future. It is to recall you to this higher range of thought and aspiration that this holy house exists. What do we come to church for if we do not need to be reminded, by what we see and hear and do here, of a world and life outside the boundaries of the widest civilization and unrevealed by the investigations of the most painstaking culture? We have hopes that are not met by any visible attainment. We have fears that are not silenced by any earthly voice. And there are some times when we have another and a more bitter consciousness—the consciousness of personal sin. We want to be forgiven. We want to be renewed. We want to be emancipated. In one word, we want that element in our lives which never enters it until the Cross has entered it, and has at once conquered us by its love and transformed us by its infinite and Divine compassion. We want all this, I say. Has it ever occurred to us to think of those other lives who want it no less, and who yet may so easily be left without it? (H. G. Potter.) *The believer hoping in God*:—I. HIS APPEAL. It implies—1. An experimental persuasion of insufficiency. This is engraven in characters too deep to be erased by the hand of time, and too legible to be obliterated by passing vanities. 2. A strong sense of danger. He feels that the claims of the Almighty are as imperative as they are reasonable; and he is convinced that while the affections are enslaved by earthly objects, the soul is in danger of perishing everlastingly. 3. The shallowness of those hopes which have respect to creature merit as the procuring cause of salvation. II. HIS AFFIRMATION. 1. His hope of pardon, acceptance, and eternal salvation centred in God. 2. His hope of support, consolation and happiness was reposed in God. From the world we can often derive neither help nor sympathy; in God we have both: He relieves and He compassionates. (W. Knight, M.A.) *Waiting and hoping*:—I. HERE IS A QUESTION. A man doesn't go head foremost toward God, he goes heart fore-

most. The great trouble with sinners is that they put the head before the heart. "What wait I for?" 1. There is one man who says, "I am waiting for the Lord's good time, the Lord's own time." Well, then, that good time has come at last. These revival services are to get men willing to be saved, and not to get God willing to save them. It is God's accepted time. Every moment that you are a sinner that is the moment God is ready to save you. Thus much I tell you, You will never see the gates wider open than they are now. 2. Another says, "I am not waiting for God's time, I am waiting for better terms." Let me tell you about that terms business. There are plenty of people that want to go to heaven on their own schedule. They want to drink a little, lie a little, and gamble occasionally. Why will a man ask any better terms than that be quit those things that damage him on earth and prevent him going to heaven? 3. "I am not waiting for any better terms," says the sinner; "I know that right is right and wrong is wrong. I am waiting for the Church to get right." Waiting for the Church to get right! Let the Church be, and do as it will, I am going to serve the Lord. Don't stay out because of the hypocrites, but come in and help crowd them out. 4. "I am waiting for feeling," says some fellow. You look at me. What do you mean by feeling? Do you mean serious thought? If you don't mean that, you don't mean anything. If serious thought is not feeling, there is no serious thought in repentance. When a man sees he ought to do right and quit the wrong, that is the only feeling there is on the subject. Do you think that you ought to be a Christian, and ought to start to-night? If you do, you have got feeling enough to sweep you right under the Cross, if you will start now. 5. Another fellow says, "I am not waiting for feeling; I am waiting until I am fit." Here is a fellow starving to death; there is a richly-loaded table. "Are you hungry?" "Yes, I am just as hungry as I can be; but I can't go, my hands ain't fit." "Here are soap and water and towels." He says, "I ain't fit to wash." Don't hang back because "I am not fit." Come up here and get fit. Did Jesus Christ come into the world to save good people? Oh no; but to save sinners. 6. "I know Christ died to save me, but I am waiting to try myself awhile." Many resolve to be good men, and they try. The devil laughs to see them. 7. "I am waiting for faith." Yes; you have been waiting forty years for faith. How much have you saved up? Like the fellow who had ten bushels of wheat, and was waiting till more grew before he would sow what he had! Sow it, and you will have a hundred-fold. "I want to be a blacksmith as soon as I get muscle." Why don't you go at it? There he stands, until at last he has not muscle enough to lift the hammer. He is getting it with a vengeance. How did you get faith? by using what you had. But now let us look at the other side. We have been looking at man, let us—II. TURN NOW TO GOD. "MY HOPE IS IN GOD." Now you have struck the keynote for eternal life. My hope is not in riches, pastor, friends, father and mother, children, Church; but my hope is in God. Will you start to-night? You may say, "I am mighty weak." I know it; but your hope is in God. "Yes; but I am a poor sinner." My hope is in God; it is not in myself. I know I am a sinner. Yes; but you are very, very weak; you are as frail as a bruised reed. Yes; but my hope is in God. If I commit myself to God, I will never go down: I will stay up as long as God stays up. I put my hand in the hand of God, and commit it all to Him to-night. Won't you do it? Let me take your hand, and help you to start to heaven. (S. P. Jones.) *The vanity of earthly things leading to hope in God:*—The text is a conclusion drawn from the preceding verse which tells of the "vain show" in which "every man" walks. Each expression goes to demonstrate this vanity. But we are not to be discontented with earth or to despise those temporal blessings which Providence places within our reach. Far be the thought. It is the resting on such things, and not the use of them, against which men need to be warned. And even Christians need this warning. Hence it is needful that we should deeply feel the vanity of all earthly things in order that we may the more earnestly adopt the language of the text. Never shall we fly to the Creator, as the source of all true happiness, till we utterly despair of finding it in the creature. And now let me rejoice with you who have found your hope in the Lord. We have become so through Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as the ransom for a ruined world, and redeemed us to God by His blood. Happy are the people in such a case, and who can say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and," etc. (J. Slade, M.A.)



Ver. 9. **I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.—Silent before God:**—This psalm is the utterance of a man in trouble. It thrills with a strong but repressed feeling. In a thoughtful man, trouble always doubles itself. Added to the smart of the immediate affliction is the moral problem which it raises, of the reason and the justice of God's administration in the world, of the promission of evil, of the tendency and destiny of this vain show called life. Every special sorrow or disaster is a stream, setting towards this unfathomable ocean of thought, with a swift and resistless current. The psalm represents a familiar experience. So many feel, if they do not think, deeply. But there is strong repression here as well as strong feeling. The writer is on his guard against hasty speech. "I said, I will take heed," etc. But in our text we get down to a deeper reason for silence. The man is so overcome by the grandeur and the mystery of God's dealing with him that he is forced to be silent. There are some mysteries that we can—so we think—solve, but there are others concerning which we can only say, "Thou didst it"—that is all. We stand like a belated traveller before the closed gate of an Egyptian temple, rising, low-browed and grim, under the stars, and no sound answers our knock. This, then, is the simple, stern picture of our text—a man in silence before the truth, God did it! The text assumes God to be a fact, and further assumes faith in God. God and His providence are both taken for granted. What, then? Well it is something to have got firm hold of a fact. A great deal is gained when the sorrow, however severe, or the mystery, however dark, has been traced up to God. When we can say, not something, but some one, did it, the matter is greatly simplified. We have no longer to count chances. Whatever we may think of the dispensation we know its source. God did it. A teacher sets for a boy a hard problem in algebra. The boy goes resolutely to work. The day passes, and he cannot solve it. He takes it home with him, and works at it there. He comes back next day to the teacher, and says, "I cannot do it;" and then he begins to talk passionately, to tell what methods he has tried, to hint that the teacher may have made a mistake in his statement, to complain that this or that in his algebra is not clearly defined. The teacher sees the difficulty; and, as the first step toward clearing it up, he quietly says, "Be still! Do not talk any more! I set the problem, and I know it is right." And if he says no more, and the boy goes back to his seat, he has gained something in that interview. There is power in the thought which the lad turns over in his mind, "This problem was set by somebody that knows. My teacher, whom I have always found wise and truthful, did it." The thought that there may have been a mistake in the statement of the sum goes out of his mind, and the matter is thus far relieved, at any rate; and, under the impulse of that relief, he may attack the question again, and successfully; or, if not, he will gain by silence, by restraint. The teacher wisely silences him, not to check his inquiry, but to bring his mind into the right condition to receive explanation. And this is just how God often deals with us. "Well," it may be said, "all that may do very well for a child; but a reasoning man cannot be disposed of in that way." All I can say is, many a reasoning man has to accept that or nothing. And after all, it may be that the child's satisfaction has something rational at bottom. Reason cannot compel God to answer; and suppose it could, would man be the better? Take a simple illustration. There are certain reasons connected with your child's education or inheritance which constrain you to live for some years in an uncongenial and unpleasant place. Neither climate, scenery, nor society is what you could desire. The child asks, "We are not poor, are we, father?"—"No."—"Could we not live somewhere else?"—"Yes."—"Then, why do we stay here when there are so many pleasant places elsewhere?" You cannot tell him; he could not understand the reasons; but, for all that, the lesson that child learns through your silence, through being obliged to be content with the simple fact, father does it, is more valuable than the knowledge of the reasons. Even if he should make a shrewd guess at your reasons, that would not please you half so much as his cheerful, unquestioning acceptance of the truth that you love him, and will do what is best for him. Now, in such dependence upon God lies the very foundation of all true character, and this is why God lays so much stress on this lesson, and so often brings us face to face with His "I did it." That kind of teaching may not make philosophers—when it does, it makes them of large mould—but it makes Pauls and Luthers. But as we look at this, "Thou didst it," we find it has some treasures of knowledge for us. Faith is not ignorance. We begin to make discoveries—this one, that if God did it, then infinite wisdom did it, and

infinite power did it. "Ah!" you say, "we know that but too well. The stroke is on our hearts and homes. It is written on fresh graves, and in the scar of dreary partings." All true. But has power no other aspect than this terrible one? Shall we symbolize it only by a hand hurling thunderbolts? or may we not picture a hand, strong indeed, but open, and pouring forth blessings? "All power is given unto me," says Jesus. Yet He laid His hand on blind eyes, and they saw; on the paralytic, and he leaped and ran. God did it, and therefore I know that infinite love did it. That is a piece of knowledge worth having indeed. Surely, when we reach that, we find the rock yielding water. Ah! we have to creep back for rest into the shadow of love after all. And how this truth gathers power when we go to this text, taking Christ with us! How it kindles under His touch! God did it; and I look up into that face of unspeakable love, with its thorn-marked brow, and say, "Thou didst it. He that hath seen Thee hath seen the Father. I am in sorrow; the sorrow is driven home by a pierced hand: Thou didst it. The pierced hand tells me of the loving heart behind the hand; and, if love hath done it, let me be silent and content." (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Silent submission to the Divine will*:—I. WHAT WE OUGHT NOT TO DO. 1. We ought not to divert our attention from a higher object, by too anxiously inquiring into second causes; much less aggravate our distress, by vainly lamenting the circumstances of a case, of which the event sufficiently proves its entire consonance with the will of God; whilst these circumstances are to be regarded only as the sword or the staff, which served to inflict a necessary wound. 2. Neither let us be tempted too deeply to speculate upon the secret intentions of our heavenly Father in such a visitation; or too solicitously to ask whether it be an infliction in mercy or in wrath. 3. Much less should we adopt the language, or harbour a sentiment of impatience or discontent. 4. Neither ought we to despair. What though the stream be dried up, which once flowed down with blessings on our lot, the Fountain whence it was supplied still remains; and though the friend be gone, Omnipotence is left. II. WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO. 1. Let us begin with acknowledging the imperfection of our own blind and fallible judgment, which had led us to build our hopes so high upon a passing shadow. 2. Painful, however, as we doubtless feel this severe act of the Divine sovereignty, let us next consider that as our sins have most clearly deserved all there is of chastisement in it, so our repentance alone, and deep contrition for sin, can avert its worst consequences as a national curse. 3. A duty most unquestionably it is, even in the utmost extremity, and in the absence of every human resource, still to assure ourselves that "the Lord reigneth;" and that in His supreme dominion are involved the operations and the results of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, and mercy. To Christians the same assurance beams with a superior brightness through the medium of that purer revelation made known to us by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sealed to us by His blood. (*C. J. Hoare, M.A.*) *Submission under Divine chastisements*:—I. WHAT IT IS NOT. 1. It is not a silence arising from an unfeeling disregard to affliction. We are not told to do violence to our nature. 2. It is not a sullen silence, like the sulky humour of an ill-managed child, who stubbornly refuses to speak when any of his wishes are not gratified. 3. Neither is it a silence which springs from natural constitution, or from good sense, as it is called, either natural or acquired. Such silence, such submission cannot be acceptable to God, inasmuch as God is not at all regarded in it. 4. Again, men may be silent under their afflictions, lest by murmurings they should bring down upon themselves yet worse. Such submission however has respect to self rather than to God. 5. It is not a despairing silence. II. WHAT IT IS. "Because Thou didst it." 1. The Christian in his afflictions considers who God is. He sees in them the hand of one who is Almighty, the High and Mighty One, perfectly holy, and just, and good. And looking at himself, who is but sinful dust and ashes, he says, "How shall I dare to murmur against God?" 2. But while the Christian silently submits himself to God, from a deep sense of His power and majesty, his fear is mixed with love, for he views God not only as an almighty Sovereign, but as a kind parent. 3. The Christian calls to mind the gracious and valuable purposes for which God afflicts His children, and in them he finds fresh motives for silent resignation. 4. The pious sufferer quiets himself under affliction with the reflection that God will not always be chiding; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. 5. The Christian, when he is under God's afflicting hand, gives himself up entirely to His disposal; in firm confidence that he suffers according to the will of God,

who is infinite in mercy and goodness, and who of very faithfulness causeth His people to be troubled. 6. A view of the God-man Christ Jesus suffering for the sins of the whole world affords another most powerful motive to the Christian to bear his sufferings with silence and submission. 7. It is not, however, inconsistent with that submission to express a sense of pain and distress; to desire and pray for deliverance; or to use any lawful means by which we may be delivered. (J. T. Sangar, M.A.) *The duty of resignation*:—Faith, obedience and patience are the three duties incumbent upon a Christian. Faith being a submission of our understanding; obedience, of our will; and patience, of the whole man to the will of God. The consideration of such a duty as patience is ever seasonable, to those in adversity, as a cordial to support them; to those in prosperity, as an amulet to guard them. We have in the text David's submissive deportment, and the reason for it. I. THE NATURE AND MEASURE OF SUBMISSION. 1. Negatively. It is not insensibility to suffering. Nor abstaining from prayer for relief of it; nor from endeavour to remove it. 2. Positively, it is the submission of the understanding so that it shall approve God's procedure. Of the will, our chief faculty. Of the passions and affections, commonly so turbulent, and of the tongue, so as to refrain from hard and bitter speech, and of the Spirit, so that we abstain from all rage and revenge against the instruments of our affliction (2 Sam. xvi. 10). We are not called upon to account enemies as friends, but we are not to take revenge. 3. All this is very difficult. Therefore, consider the worth of such submissive spirit, how excellent it is (Rom. vii. 37). See it in Moses and especially in Christ. It was suffering which redeemed the world. But it is difficult, because of the opposition to it which we find in ourselves, and from the mean though mistaken opinion of it which the generality of men entertain. Therefore, there is needed an early and long endeavour after such an excellent frame of mind. II. THE REASONS AND ARGUMENTS FOR IT because of our relation to God. Think—1. Of God's irresistible power. How useless resistance is (1 Cor. x. 22; Ps. cxxxv. 6). Then—2. Of God's absolute sovereignty and dominion over all things, founded, as it is, upon the greatest and most undeniable title, which is that of creation and providence (Job. ix. 12; Rev. iv. 11). 3. His infinite and unfailing wisdom, which is never at fault (Job. iv. 18). Would it be better for us to have our own way? Passengers in a ship always submit to their pilot's discretion. 4. His great goodness, benignity and mercy which is "over all His works." God does not willingly afflict (Lam. iii. 39; Isa. xxviii. 21). Consider also—5. God's exact and inviolable justice. He could not do us wrong. 6. And how He rewards the submissive soul. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." Could we but trust God to do our business for us, to assert our cause and vindicate our innocence, we should find that He would not only answer, but outdo our hopes. III. CONCLUSION. Learn—1. The necessity of submission. 2. Its prudence. There are few things in the world so entirely bad but some advantage may be had of them by dexterous management. Like Isaac let us take the wood upon our shoulders, though we be designed for sacrifice, and who knows but that, as in his case, deliverance may come? (2 Cor. iv. 17). Inward if not outward relief will come to us if we submit. 3. Think also of the decency and comeliness of such submission (Dan. v. 23; Luke xxi. 19). Thus may we make ourselves happy in the most afflicted, abject and forlorn condition of life. Therefore, let us "take up our cross," "looking unto Jesus" as our great example and who, because He endured, "is now set down at the right hand of God." (R. South, D.D.) *Christian resignation*:—Such resignation is all too rare. The words of resignation may be on the lips, but impatience may be in the heart. To provide against such evil we must study to be real disciples of Christ; and we must have our minds turned to those doctrines and habituated to those exercises of religion, which help us to submit amid the calamities of life. Without such aid we are overcome when calamity falls upon us. Let us consider some of these aids to resignation. I. THE REMEMBERING THAT WHEN GOD VISITS US WITH DEREAVEMENTS, HE ONLY TAKES AWAY WHAT IS HIS OWN. Now, if we will take this view, if we not only speculatively assent to it as an abstract truth, but have it as a part of our practical creed, it will lead us to surrender any comfort whatever, and to make the surrender with patience and readiness into the hands of God, from whom we at first received it. II. THAT GOD ACCOMPANIES OUR DEREAVEMENTS WITH CONSOLATION AND SUPPORT. How much is still left to us of good. All is not lost. Has it not often happened in the case of the afflicted that "their latter end," like that of Job, has been "much more than their beginning"? In all

this there is something that is well fitted to inspire us with patience and contentment. Whatever we suffer is much less, and whatever we enjoy is much more, than we deserve. But He gives us consolation and support of a spiritual kind, far more precious and far more efficacious still. The Bible, prayer, etc. III. In the third place, we should be resigned to the will of God when He afflicts us, because AFFLICTION IS FOR OUR GOOD. To mere worldly persons there is nothing good but that which gives them much pleasure. But to true Christians that, and that alone, is good, whatever it may be, which promotes their spiritual and immortal interests; which tends to make them wiser and better. There is still another consideration by which we ought to be influenced when involved in affliction. IV. God who sends it is entitled to our patient acquiescence, our cheerful submission, BECAUSE AT THE VERY TIME THAT WE ARE SUFFERING UNDER HIS HAND, HE HAS IN RESERVE, AND IS PREPARING FOR US, THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN AND IMMORTALITY. (A. Thompson, D.D.)

Ver. 11. When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth; surely every man is vanity.—*The secret blasting of men*.—These words give an account of two things which are the matter of the greatest wonder. 1. How it comes to pass there are so many and so great evils in the world. 2. How so many persons come to wither and fall away, and come to nothing in the world. As to the first, we are told what is the cause of their evils—"iniquity;" and as to the second, it is God's rebukes which do blast men. Therefore we learn—I. THAT GOD DOETH PUNISH SINNERS. The word "punish" is used when not strictly correct, for we say a man is punished when any evil befalls him, though he hath done nothing that may procure it. Therefore, in such punishment as the text speaks of, we must except—1. The effects of God's absolute sovereignty and power. Therefore, we are not to say that God punishes a man because of the lot in life that He has appointed him. These differences lie within the lot of God's sovereignty, and speak nothing of either love or hatred. 2. Trials, such as Job's and many other good men. 3. Disciplines to teach us not to over-value the world. 4. Those sufferings that come upon us through the evil of others. But, these exceptions being made, it is yet true that sin is the cause of punishment. For many sins are the natural cause of the evils that follow them. Punishments are required to maintain God's honour in the world (Eccl. viii. 11), and the variety of things and changeable conditions are as requisite to maintain virtue and holiness among mankind as the winds, which occasion storms and tempests, which put the air and sea into motion, and so keep them from stench and putrefaction. This I observe, a great many scriptures impute creatures' degeneracy to their living at ease (Zech. i.; Amos vi. 1; Luke xii. 19; Jerem. xlviii. 11). II. THESE REBUKES OF GOD DO BLAST MEN. God can immediately, by His influence, fortify and encourage a man's mind, or else throw him down into discontent and frowardness. For the minds and spirits of men lie open to God as much as ought of the creation. When God will, the hearts of men will serve them, and be more than themselves; and if God withdraws, they come to nothing. How contented are some men in a condition that the world doth despise? and how much discontent in others, that live in worldly splendour? Therefore, note—1. How doth God bring about the ruin of men? Sometimes by taking away their understanding; as Ahithophel and Judas. Making a man discontented and unhappy with his lot in life (Eccles. i. 24). All good becomes insipid (Job. vi. 6). By suspending the forces of nature so that they render not the service they are wont (Deut. xxviii. 23). By withdrawing His blessing from men's endeavours, so that they become unprosperous (Eccles. ii. 26; Prov. x. 22). By awakening the guilt of the sinner upon his conscience, making that to sting and gall him, and then all the world is nothing. Or, when men, through their own fear, suspicion and jealousy, have certain foretastes of God's refusal and displeasure. 2. Where there is imminent danger of such judgments. Where a man sins against light. Where there is hypocrisy, apostasy, worldliness, exemption from outward punishment as these may be. Whosoever God is pleased out of respect to His worshippers, or out of His compassion towards innocent infants and harmless creatures, to keep off judgments, then is it to be thought that those persons that are wilful sinners, etc., shall hear from God in private; to abate their confidence, and to show how exorbitant they are in their ways. This God can do by letting them sink down into mental distraction, etc. For God can dispossess a man of all his comforts by not giving him power

of self-enjoyment and taking content. For this of the two is a far greater mercy of God, for a man to have less and a contented mind, than to have much more and not have satisfaction. For power of self-enjoyment is a far greater thing than right and title. In the last place the case of high spiritual advantages. That was the aggravation of the sin of Capernaum, Coraizin and Bethsaida, that they were lifted up to heaven; and they are threatened to be thrown down into hell. There is no wonder that men cannot hold up their heads, when they are neither at peace with God, nor at peace with their own consciences; and all these things that are without a man will make no more recompense for the want of the peace of conscience than it will make a recompense for the pain of the gout to lie upon a bed of down. Men have no peace, neither with God, because not reconciled to the nature, mind nor will of God; nor have they peace in their own consciences, because under guilt. Therefore, no wonder that friends and revenues, etc., will not relieve them; they have an internal wound. In this respect I may truly say that men's sin go before them into judgment. It was something in secret between Cain and his conscience that his countenance fell; for he had sacrificed as well as his brother Abel; but it was something within him. In Nabal, his heart died within him upon his wife's words only; which is strange, for a covetous miserable wretch will most commonly endure words hard enough; for words break no bones, but the text tells us God struck him. Other instances are Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 14-23); Judas (Matt. xxvii. 3-5); Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 9). Another lesson from the subject is, the world and the devil cannot hurt men if men do not themselves consent. If we are guilty before God, and repent not, and do not seek pardon, then are we in fear and danger every moment, for at God's sentence our souls live or die. (B. Whichcote, D.D.)

**Ver. 12. Hold not Thy peace at my tears.—Earthly tears and heavenly songs:—** This is a beautiful world, but there are tears in it. All eyes have them, and they fall fast and often. Their causes are varied. 1. God's rebukes for sins. Therefore repent. 2. The reign of temptation. Seek God's strength. 3. The difficulties in our work for Christ. 4. The condition of society. But the worst may be reclaimed. Blessed is it to make the endeavour. 5. Bereavement. In the Royal Academy there was a small but pathetic picture. It is a coastguardsman's cottage. His beloved wife is dead. There is the table spread for his meal; the young daughter in a black dress is cutting a loaf of bread; his little boy—boy like—is eating away at his dinner; the heart-broken man eats not, but stretches out his hand to touch a little child in a cradle beside him. Here is sorrow, here is sadness. And there are thousands of such homes. But there are no tears in heaven. (G. W. McCree.) **I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.—The Christian a stranger and sojourner:—**I. THE PSALMIST'S EXPERIENCE INCLUDES A DEEP AND HABITUAL SENSE OF THE TRANSITORY AND UNSATISFYING NATURE OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS. II. TO BE A STRANGER WITH GOD, AND A SOJOURNER, INCLUDES REALIZING ANTICIPATIONS OF ANOTHER AND ENDURING WORLD. III. THE PSALMIST'S EXPERIENCE COMPREHENDS AN EARNEST AND ASSIDUOUS CULTIVATION OF ALL CHRISTIAN GRACES AND VIRTUES. The character of a stranger and a sojourner is made up of many bright lineaments of excellence, harmoniously blended as are rays of different hues in the solar orb. Certain features of his experience may, at first view, appear to be hardly consistent with others; as, for example, undaunted firmness with a meek and lowly spirit; the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove; inflexible opposition to all sin, with profound compassion towards all sinners. IV. TO BE A STRANGER WITH GOD, AND A SOJOURNER, INCLUDES A FAITHFUL IMPROVEMENT OF THE ORDINANCES OF GRACE AND THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE. (J. Smyth, D.D.) **Believers considered as strangers and sojourners:—**I. WHENCE IS IT THAT GOOD MEN CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS ON EARTH? 1. Every man is a stranger who is not a native of the place where he resides; but a sojourner is one who makes only a passing visit to the place, with a resolution to leave it again and proceed on his journey. This last is a distinguishing character of the saints (2 Cor. v. 1, 2). They are strangers in affection as well as condition; their hearts are elsewhere. 2. The saints justly count themselves strangers because they are regenerated, born from above, distant from their native country. II. WHAT MANNER OF BEHAVIOUR IS MOST EXPRESSIVE OF THIS TEMPER, AND BEST SUITED TO THE CONDITION OF STRANGERS? 1. If we look on this earth as a strange country, through which we are only passing to our native home, it certainly ought to be our

care that we receive as little hurt as possible in our passage. The greatest hurt the world can do us is to make us forget the place of our destination, and loiter in the way. Its smiles more to be dreaded than its frowns. 2. It is not enough that we receive no hurt; be careful to make all the provision we can for our better country (1 John iii. 8; 2 Pet. i. 11). 3. It becomes strangers to endure with patience and fortitude any hardships and inconveniences (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.) 4. If we view heaven as our everlasting abode, we ought to be solicitous to be thoroughly acquainted with the way (Ps. cxix. 19, 54; xix. 7-11). 5. If we consider ourselves as strangers, we ought to behave like those who belong to a better country. They who love their country will be jealous of its credit. 6. If we have turned our back on the world, let us help one another on in our way, and take as many as possible with us; do all we can to strengthen the weak, advise the doubtful, animate the discouraged. (*R. Walker.*)

Ver. 13. **O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more!**—*A prayer in the prospect of death.*—I. A DEPARTURE ANTICIPATED. Death is clearly referred to, not annihilation. The text suggests the idea of departure—"going hence." A traveller departs from an inn at which he has been refreshed; he pursues his journey, and reaches home. A mariner departs from the port at which he has touched; he completes his voyage, and arrives at the desired haven. Also, death is a going hence from present employments, and from present connections, trials, privileges, enjoyments, prospects. II. THE PRAYER PRESENTED. Here is implied a state of weakness—probably of the body. Or it may refer to political weakness. But yet, more probably it refers to the state of the mind, its depression and declension. Hence he prays that his spiritual strength may be revived. No health is comparable to this in importance. Many are the motives which should lead us thus to pray. 1. Our safety. 2. Our comfort. 3. Activity. 4. Usefulness. Take notice of a man who has lost the power and spirit of religion; of what use is he in his family? He may have natural affection, and may be attentive to the temporal welfare of his connections; but in what does he benefit their souls? Of what use is this man in the church? He calls himself a member; his name is entered among those who have given themselves to the Lord and to one another, according to his will; but where is his zeal for the interest of the church? Would you be useful, as well as active and happy? You must feel the power of genuine religion; you must experience its vigour and its growth. "O spare me, that I may," etc. 5. Your dying well pleads for this prayer. Many professors of religion die in a very doubtful way; others give real cause to fear that all is not well; but "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of this man is peace." It may not be triumph, though in some instances this is the case; but it is tranquil and happy. III. CONCLUSION. 1. Death is certain—then prepare for it. 2. Live to some good purpose. What is life unless lived to some good purpose? Remember we are Christ's, "bought with a price." Therefore, let us in life and death seek to glorify Him. (*T. Kidd.*) *David's view of the grave.*—The true mark of the Christian is in his solitary prayer. What men are before others does not say much, but it is when alone that their true character is revealed. But godly men vary much in their experiences, and here in this psalm we find many mingled feelings. I. AN AFFECTING ILLUSTRATION OF DEATH. It is a "going hence." This true of all. It is not a lonely path, but a highway open to all passengers, and along which all must go. And the traffic is continuous, uninterrupted. And the pace is swift. "Swifter than a weaver's shuttle," said Job. "The wind passeth over it and it is gone." And our going this way is certain and unavoidable. The king of terrors hath no heart nor ears! From his arrest no state of eminence can screen us; and his summons no greatness can control. The added term, "going hence," gives the idea that it is no short journey, or a near remove; but that he is going distantly, and beyond all ordinary space! And this going hence is for ever—"no more seen." Not that David believed that the soul perished. He knew the contrary. He spake of this world only. And at death we do "go hence," and are "no more seen" in the world!—whether the senator, the statesman, the teacher, the orator, the poet, the merchant. In his family, and in the church. And more especially is the text true of sinners (Ps. xxxvii. 36, 37.) II. THE AVOWED DESIRE IN CONSEQUENCE—"O spare me," etc. Now, our "strength" consists in—1. Clear evidence of our state. 2. Habitual readiness. 3. A recovery of strength. III. WHEREFORE HE THUS PRAYS—1. From natural desire. 2. Nervous feeling. 3. Spiritual decay.

4. For greater good and better service. Now, let the sinner use this prayer. The backslider. The spiritual, for themselves and others. (W. B. Williams, A.M.) *Death*:—The consideration that at death we are to go from hence, so as to be here no more, is that which makes life upon earth of the greatest moment, and what even good men may sometimes pray to have continued a while longer, that they may be better prepared for their everlasting remove. This the psalmist here does, from the consideration mentioned; having but one life wherein to prepare for an endless state, how earnest was he that it might not conclude till his work was finished, as it was to be done now or never. I. THE NOTION UNDER WHICH DEATH IS REPRESENTED, a going hence. II. HOW, WHEN ONCE GONE, WE ARE TO BE NO MORE. III. WHEREIN OUR STRENGTH LIES FOR GOING HENCE. IV. HOW MUCH WE ARE CONCERNED TO PRAY THAT GOD WOULD SPARE US, TO GET OR RECOVER STRENGTH PREPARATORY TO OUR FINAL REMOVE. V. THAT THIS IS THE GREAT THING GOOD MEN HAVE IN THEIR EYE IN DESIRING LIFE. VI. WHEN THEY MAY BE LED TO PRAY THAT GOD WOULD SPARE THEM. VII. THE USE OF THE WHOLE. (D. Wilcox.)

*Prayer for prolongation of life*:—The believer is not at all times blessed with a spiritual and happy frame of mind, at least not in an equal degree; for there are times when sin lies heavy upon his heart. No wonder, then, if he cries out, when death knocks at the door, "Oh, spare me," etc. I. ILLUSTRATE THE PASSAGE.

1. Death is represented as a "going hence," or departing from this world—out of time into eternity. 2. When persons go hence, they are said to be "no more." 3. Death is often, even to good men, an object of fear and dread. Those who are tired of the wilderness, and long to see the goodly mountain and Lebanon, would nevertheless wish, if possible, to avoid the Jordan that lies between. 4. Where this fear becomes immoderate, it is criminal, and highly unbecoming the Christian character. Are we not willing to be at rest, to be at home in our Father's house? 5. Yet this is not all he prays for, but that he may "recover strength" before he goes hence, and be no more. This may include the recovery of natural strength, or that he might be raised from his present infirm and languishing state; and such a prayer was offered by Job. But however desirable a revival of bodily strength may be, spiritual strength is still more so; and the prayer of a good man must be supposed to include both. This recovery of strength may embrace—(1) A more eminent degree of spirituality and devotedness to God. (2) Assurance of an interest in the Divine favour. II. APPLY THE SUBJECT TO OURSELVES. 1. If death be so dreadful to the righteous, what must it be to the wicked and ungodly. Their roots are so fastened in the earth, and their affections so firmly fixed on sensible objects, that it is no wonder they should start back at the thoughts of dying. 2. Let Christians feel humbled and ashamed that their inordinate love of life should render death so formidable. Have you not forsaken all for Christ; and will you not forsake life itself for him? (D. Beddome, M.A.) *Death deprecated*:—

I. DEATH IS AN EVENT OF DREAD SIGNIFICANCE. 1. It puts an end to our present mode of being. How the change is to be brought about; and what your experiences will be at the awful moment of transition, and afterwards, no mortal man can tell. No wonder, therefore, if in thought of these things your courage sinks, and you cry, "O spare me." 2. It separates us from all we hold dear on earth. "Go hence." After all, this world is very dear to us. Here we were born. Here our minds have been formed, and our characters developed. Here we have tasted all the delights of knowledge, of friendship, and of personal achievement. 3. It settles for ever our spiritual destiny. II. GOOD MEN SOMETIMES SHRINK FROM DEATH UNDER A SENSE OF WEAKNESS AND UNPREPAREDNESS. There are instances of good men who were prepared and ready to die. But such a state of mind is rare and inconstant. The best of men have their times of misgiving, as well as their moments of exulting faith. Doubting Castle and the Valley of the Shadow of Death lie in the pilgrim's path, as well as the Delectable Mountains. 1. Strength is needed to face death with fortitude. 2. Strength is lost through sin (Ps. xxxi. 10; Isa. lix. 1, 2). 3. Strength may be recovered if sought in due time. III. IN THE SOUL'S DARKEST HOUR GOD IS A SUFFICIENT REFUGE. 1. He is the Lord of life (1 Sam. ii. 6; Job xii. 10; xiv. 5, 6; Rev. i. 18). 2. He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (Ps. cxlii. 8, 13; Ezek. xxxiii. 11). 3. He is mighty to save. (W. Forsyth, M.A.) *Prayer for recovery*:—When we thank God for our creation and preservation, we are true to an instinct which is rarely overpowered. We shrink from death just as the psalmist shrank from it, who, if he did not regard it as the end of all things, only dimly conjectured of a life to come. We shrink from death, and therefore from that which is wont to herald its approach, the loss of

health, the decline of strength. True, there are those for whom the strain of incurable sorrow or hopeless disease has turned life into a living death; these cannot take into their lips the psalmist's entreaty and ask to be spared ere they go hence. We have heard men and women pray for death, and press for the assurance that their hour was come; but for most men life is sweet, and strength a precious boon. And what is it that makes it so? Is there something higher than animal instinct, something worthier than even the strong ties of human love to bind us to this frail existence and prompt the prayer for its continuance? Why prolong the "vain show" in which man "walketh and disquieteth himself in vain"? Surely that which makes recovery of strength so welcome a thing if once we know what issues upon our use of it, is the prospect of a new probation, a new chance of employing aright God's wondrous endowment of life. "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee," cried the king, who hung between life and death; and we, who, whatever we may reverently hope, are told of no opportunities save those given to us here—we who know how much we have done amiss and left undone, may still cry for respite when the close of all is upon us. There is, indeed, no passage in human experience so solemn as the rescue from mortal sickness. Never does God seem to deal so directly with the soul as when He makes life over again to a man by a fresh grant, and even when its shades have begun to fall, adjourns for him the night in which no man can work. What depth of meaning there is in the return to life from the gates of the grave, if only we have eyes open to God's dealing. Friends rejoice and congratulate, but there is something more precious than the fondest welcome back to the world we were quitting; and that, I repeat, is the renewal of opportunity, the summons to "redeem the time," to repair the mistakes and omissions of the past. Yes, now we see how the years, freighted with golden possibilities, have been buried one by one in the bosom of an eternity which never gives up its dead. Well may we fear, when all looked so faulty and disordered, to face the account we have to give. We have trifled with a high trust, and we would fain retrieve our shame. We have numbered our days now in the glare of the immediate future, and would "apply our hearts unto wisdom," and therefore we cry, "Oh, spare me, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more seen." This, far more than the renewal of earthly opportunities, far more than the averting of sorrow from those to whom we are dear, is what gives value to convalescence. The Christian prays to be spared above all that he may learn and unlearn; that he may do more for God, for his fellow-men. He knows that lengthened days, unless it serves these ends, can be no boon at all. (*Canon Duckworth.*)

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#### PSALM XL.

**VERS. 1-17. I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.—Waiting for the Lord:**—There is a Divine law of waiting which has an essential connection with the larger law of giving. I. IN WAITING FOR GOD WE DISCOVER OUR DISTANCE FROM HIM. God may be near us, and we far off from Him. II. WAITING FOSTERS THE SENSE OF A NEED WHICH GOD ALONE CAN SATISFY. The sense of the depth of guilt must be gained by sounding. III. WAITING REVEALS THE GOODNESS OF GOD. If the sinner reviews his life, the sense of the Divine mercies is blended by his sense of guilt. He sees the golden roll of the providences of his life. The goodness of God leads him to repentance. IV. WAITING LEADS TO A DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN THE FORM AND THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION (vers. 5-8). Every one who has come into covenant with God in his heart, and is now living in covenant with Him, has a book in his hand. It describes his duties and his rights in relation to God; and he promises to make it the guide of his life. As Christ engaged to fulfil the volume of the book as it applied to Him, so we engage to fulfil it as it applies to us. V. WAITING SHOWS US THE IMPORTANCE OF AN OPEN CONFESSION OF GOD. The selfishness of sin is now revealed to us as the inner depth of its guilt. Will you, if God comes now and lifts you out of this pit, confess Him; will you try to live as a secret disciple, or will you publish what He has done for your soul; will you take a public position, and let



your light shine? (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The Christian's patience*.—Patience, as it is not apathy, is not sluggishness, or indolence. There are circumstances which justify haste. For example, we do not walk, but rush out of a house on fire, or falling, a sudden ruin. Patient waiting for the Lord is quite consistent with boldness in design, and energy and promptitude in action; and only inconsistent with those unbelieving, impetuous, ungovernable, headstrong passions which breed impatience, and lead people to run before Providence instead of waiting on it. Of this let me give you two examples. I. BY CONTRAST ILLUSTRATE WHAT IT IS TO WAIT ON THE LORD. 1. Look at the conduct of Abraham. On his leaving Ur of the Chaldeans to wander a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, God had promised that he should become the father of a great nation. But though the father of the faithful, he formed an unhallowed alliance with an Egyptian; then, with terrible consequences following, he failed to wait patiently for the Lord. 2. Look at the conduct of Rebekah. The Lord had promised that to her younger son Jacob the covenant blessing should be given. But she could not see how this was to be, and so, becoming impatient, she takes steps to anticipate God's time, and lays her hand on the wheel of Providence. Rash woman! she will hurry on the event, and so contrives that lie and deception on Isaac which blasted for ever their domestic peace. Rebekah and he ran before Providence; they did not wait patiently on the Lord. II. LOOK AT DAVID'S OWN EXAMPLE OF WAITING ON THE LORD. A merchant in times of bad trade, or other trying circumstances, instead of trusting in God to bring him through his difficulties, or sustain him under them, has recourse to fraud; or a poor man, instead of trusting Providence with the supply of his wants, and committing his children to the care of Him who hears the young ravens cry, hard-pinched and pressed, puts out his hand to steal. But how often David was tempted to impatience. How long he had to wait ere the promise made to him was fulfilled. How faint his hope of ever reaching the throne appeared; yet David hoped in the Lord, and patiently waited God's way to put him in possession of the kingdom. III. CONSIDER HOW WE ARE PATIENTLY TO WAIT ON GOD. 1. We are to wait patiently on Providence in the common affairs of life. To the neglect of this may be attributed not a few of the failures that happen in business. People are impatient to get on in life; to acquire a competency; to be rich. 2. We are to wait patiently on God under the trials of life. He who went forth so magnanimously against Goliath turns pale with fear before those who neither had the giant's stature nor the giant's strength. Where is now the man, whose faith rising with the trial, once said, He that delivered me from the paw of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine! But he feigns madness, letting his spittle fall on his beard, playing himself off for a fool. What a contrast to the heroic trust of Daniel, who, after the night spent with the lions, into whose den he had been cast, was able to reply to the anxious king, My God hath sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me. And who wait on God piously, prayerfully, patiently in their trials, shall have the same tale to tell; the same experience—He will shut the lions' mouths, that they shall not hurt them. 3. We are to wait patiently upon God to complete our sanctification. We cannot be too earnest, too diligent, but we may be too impatient. Take comfort! "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation!" The river may appear flowing away from the sea, when, but turning round the base of some opposing hill, it is pursuing an onward course. The ship may appear to be standing away from the harbour, when, beating up in the face of adverse winds, she is only stretching off on the other tack, and at every tack making progress shoreward, though to others than seamen she seems to lose it. It is star by star that the hosts of night march out; it is minute by minute that we grow in other things. Here also, then, let us wait patiently for the Lord. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Waiting for the Lord*.—Some may remember the feeling of disappointment with which in their youth they read the last line of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." "Learn to labour and to wait." Any one could understand the difficulty of labour, but how easy if one had only to wait! But experience has taught us a great lesson, that all labour is light compared with the labour, the stress, the suspense and weariness of waiting. The word "patiently" is not in the Hebrew, but it is implied. Such waiting is full of heroic elements—fortitude, resignation, faith, expectation, perseverance. As long as anything can be gained by effort it will be active, for it is too earnest to sit and rest when it should stand and work; but when the desired good is something beyond its reach, when personal exertion proves unavailing and help from others is impossible, then its

agitation will be calmed and its hope invigorated by its determination to wait patiently for the Lord. There are exigencies in life when comfort can come from no other source. The providences of God are often so dark and full of seeming menace that the soul perturbed by them is like the ship in which Paul sailed when no small tempest lay on it, and when for many days neither sun nor star appeared. A drifting soul is in more jeopardy than a drifting ship. Again, patient waiting for the Lord gives solace and strength to the Christian when disheartened by the slow growth of his own spiritual life. Such dissatisfaction with self, when accompanied by longing for a more entire conformity to the Divine image, is the sure evidence of a gracious state, though it be not recognized by the subject of it. To eradicate all that is dark and defiling from the soul, and to cultivate the plants of righteousness until they are laden with their mellow clusters, require not only diligence but time. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth," etc. So, too, wait patiently for the Lord when discouraged because you see so little fruit of your labour (Ps. cxxvi. 6). (*M. D. Hoge, D.D.*) **REMINISCENCES OF A GODLY LIFE:—I. HE RECOLLECTS HIS PERSONAL DEVOTION.** 1. The nature of his religious exercise. He "waited patiently for the Lord"; it was the habit of his soul. (1) Belief in the Divine existence. (2) Sense of dependency upon God. (3) An expectation of good from the Almighty. 2. The result of his religious exercise. "He inclined unto me and heard my cry. He came near to me." It is the prayer of the whole life that the Almighty hears and answers. It is not a spasmodic shriek, it is a settled, sacred state of being (Isa. lvii. 15). **II. HE RECOLLECTS DIVINE INTERPOSITIONS.** "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit." The spiritual state of truly good men. 1. It is a Divinely restored state. From what a wretched state has the sinner been delivered. (1) State of darkness—a pit. The sun that bathes the world in its brightness breaks not the dense gloom of the pit. (2) Misery—horrible pit—cold, black, dense, tumultuous. (3) Helplessness. "Miry clay"—ever sinking into mud of moral corruption, all the faculties of being submerged and held fast. 2. It is a Divinely established state. Hast "set my feet upon a rock." (1) His intellect is established in truth. (2) His heart is established in love. (3) His purpose is established in conduct. 3. It is a Divinely progressive state. "He has established my goings." Onward is the watchword of the godly man. The point reached to-day is the starting-point for to-morrow. 4. It is a Divinely happy state. "He hath put a new song in my mouth." Godliness is happiness. 5. It is a Divinely influential state. "Many shall see it and fear." (1) Godliness is conspicuous. You cannot conceal the true light. (2) Godliness is revered. "And fear." (3) Godliness is blest. He who lives a godly life becomes unconsciously the influence of bringing others to God. **III. HE RECOLLECTS THE HAPPINESS OF RELIGION** (ver. 4). 1. True religion is trusting in the Lord, not in man. 2. True religion, because of this, is ever connected with blessedness. (1) Reason shows this. (2) History shows this. (3) Consciousness shows this. **IV. HE RECOLLECTS GENERAL INTERVENTIONS OF MERCY.** "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works," etc. 1. They are wonderful. Wonderful in their variety, condescension, forbearing and compassionate love. 2. They are intelligent—not accidental, capricious or impulsive. They are the results and embodiment of thought. All God's works are thoughts in action. 3. They are innumerable. Can you count the sands on the sea-shore, or the drops that make up the ocean? Then you may sum up the mercies of God to you. (*Homilist.*) **Patient waiting:—**It would be far easier, I apprehend, for nine men out of ten to join a storming party trying to take the citadel of the enemy than to lie on a rack or hang on a cross without repining. Yes, patience is a strength; and patience means not merely strength, but wisdom in exercising it. We, the creatures of a day, make one of the nearest approaches that is possible for us to the life of God. St. Augustine has finely said of God, "Patiens quia æternus" ("Because He lives for ever He can afford to wait"). The greatest heroes among men are they who "wait patiently." (*Canon Liddon.*)

**Ver. 2. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.—Out of the pit:—I. HIS CONDITION.** 1. He was sunk in deep and dark depression. He was what we describe as "down," brought very low, plunged into great despondency and despair. We very well know what brings men into the pit. Grief can do it, and failure, and a multiplicity of tasks. But, above all, sin takes the "lift" and buoyancy out of life, and makes it the victim of an appalling

gravitation which sucks it into abysmal depths of helplessness and darkness and despair. This is the horrible pit in which we have all been sunk. 2. A second element in the condition of the psalmist is interpreted by the descriptive word "horrible," "the horrible pit," or, as the margin gives it, "the pit of noise." And is not this the modern experience? When a man is in the pit he is addressed by confused and confusing voices. One man calls to us and tells us that our depression is purely imaginary, we are the victims of our own thoughts and dreams. Another declares that we are a little "out of sorts," and that the doctor will put us right in a week. A third avers that "more need we the Divine than the physician." It is a "pit of noise" and confusion. 3. A third element in the suppliant's depression is described in the phrase, "the miry clay." Surely we know the experience in our own life! The ground slips from under our feet. We have no foothold. There is nothing solid, nothing dependable. II. HIS RESOURCES. "I waited patiently." His being was collected, and all fixed in intense expectancy on God. 1. "He inclined unto me." The figure is exquisitely helpful. "He stretched right out and down to me." His arm was long enough to reach me, even when I was in the deepest pit. 2. "And heard my cry." Just as the mother, when the house is filled with company, hears the cry of her babe in the chamber above. Or just as a shepherd hears the faint lone cry of the lost lamb in some ravine on the open moor. III. HIS DELIVERANCE. "He brought me out." That is to say, He lifts me out of my captivity. We cannot struggle out. Struggling will only aggravate our bondage. When we are in the Slough of Despond One comes to us called "Help." "He set my feet upon a rock." Hitherto I have been in the miry clay, the victim of uncertainties, despondencies and doubts. But now He has "enlarged my steps under me," and I find myself upon the highway of the Lord. "And He hath established my goings." Thus He not only lifts and confirms me, but He vitalizes my soul. We all know the ease that comes to the feet when we have been trudging through heavy mire and we find ourselves upon a well-made turnpike road. As soon as we come to the good road we say to one another, "Now we shall be able to step out." That is the suggestion in the psalmist's phrase, "and hath established my goings." We are able to step out, nay, to go as those who are "marching to Zion"! (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *The supreme change*.—I. WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD DELIVERS MEN FROM. 1. A position of degradation—"A pit." 2. A position of misery—"A horrible pit." 3. A position of danger—"The miry clay." (1) Insecurity. (2) Helplessness. (3) Death (Jer. xxxviii. 9). II. WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD BRINGS MEN TO. 1. A condition of spiritual elevation—"up." 2. A condition of spiritual stability—"And set my feet upon a rock." 3. A condition of spiritual advancement—"And established my goings." 4. A condition of religious happiness—"And He hath put a new song," etc. III. IN EFFECTING THIS CHANGE THE DIVINE BEING AND THE SINNER HAVE THEIR DISTINCT PROVINCES TO OCCUPY. 1. The sinner prays—evidencing—(1) Deep sense of need. (2) Deep consciousness of helplessness. (3) Trust in the mercy and power of God. 2. The sinner waits—(1) In earnest expectation. (2) In the assurance of help being granted. 3. The Lord inclines His ear and hears the cry. 4. The Lord puts forth His saving power—"He brought me up." IV. LESSONS. 1. To believers. (1) Spiritual elevation no cause for boasting. (2) Spiritual stability no cause for self-confidence. (3) Spiritual advancement to be carefully maintained. (4) Religious happiness to be continued and increased. 2. To unbelievers. (1) Yours a position of degradation, misery and danger. (2) This position gradually becoming worse. (3) Escape is possible by penitential application to God (Hosea xiii. 9). What a future sinners must have if they remain in the pit! What a future sinners may have if they turn to Christ! (Julius Briggs.) *Brought up from the horrible pit*.—This passage has been very frequently, and rightly, used as telling the experience of God's people. Yet I am not certain that the first verse could be rightly uttered by all of us. Could we say, "I waited patiently for the Lord"? Might it not be more truthfully said of us, "I waited impatiently for the Lord"? Alas, patience is still a scarce virtue upon the earth. Therefore, though we may regard the psalm as in a secondary sense belonging to David, in the first instance a greater than David is here. For the first person who uttered these words was the Messiah. Our text, therefore, belongs primarily to Him. Note, then—I. OUR LORD'S BEHAVIOUR as here set forth. 1. He waited upon the Lord. He did so all His life, but this waiting became more conspicuous in His passion and death. 2. And patiently. His atonement had not been complete had it been otherwise. No

expiation could have been made by an impatient Saviour. 3. And prayerfully. Let Gethsemane tell. Jabbock is outdone by Kidron. See, then, our pattern. Have we waited, and waited thus? II. OUR LORD'S DELIVERANCE. 1. It is represented as a bringing up out of a horrible pit. I have been in the dungeon at Rome in which, according to tradition, Peter and Paul were confined. It was, indeed, a horrible pit, for originally it had no entrance but a round hole in the rock above; and when that was blocked neither light nor fresh air could enter. No being has ever been so cruel to man as man. Man is the worst of monsters to his kind, and his cruel inventions are many. Now, our Lord was like a man put into a pit. Hence he was quite alone. Thus it happened to our Saviour. All His disciples forsook Him and fled. And in total darkness. Midnight brooded over His spirit. And full of distress. The grief and sorrow which He felt can never be described. He felt care upon care, night blackening night. But He was brought up out of all this; at that moment when He said, "It is finished"; and at the resurrection and by His ascension to the right hand of God. Now His sorrow is ended. 2. A second figure is used to tell of His grief. "Out of the miry clay." In such horrible pits the imprisoned wretch often found himself sinking in the mire. And our blessed Lord found when He was suffering for us that everything appeared to give way beneath Him. But He was brought up like Jonah was from the deeps. And He was set "on a rock." He stands on a firm foundation in all that He does for us. Judgment and truth confirm His ways. When He saves He has a right to save. And His goings are established for continuance, certainty, victory. Best of all, there is a new song in His mouth, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." The song of heaven is "the song of Moses and the Lamb." III. THE LORD'S REWARD. "Many"—not all, but many—"shall see it and fear," etc. They shall, for He hath the key of all hearts. They shall see; see Him as their Saviour, and shall fear. It makes men fear to see a bleeding Christ. And best of all, they "shall trust in the Lord." IV. THE LORD'S LIKENESS IN HIS PEOPLE. All this may be repeated in them. Like sorrow, but let there be like waiting, and there shall be like deliverance. Sinner sinking in guilt, He can deliver you. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *History of the soul's salvation*:—I. THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY. 1. The author of it. "The Lord" (Ps. xxv. 5). 2. The nature of it. "On a rock" (Ps. xxvii. 5). 3. The individual realization of it. "My feet" (Ps. xxxi. 8; 2 Tim. i. 12). II. THE BELIEVER'S WALK. 1. A firm footing. Feet on a rock. "Wherein we stand" (Rom. v. 2). 2. Steady progress (Ps. xxxvii. 23; Ps. xvi. 11). "Established my goings." 3. Safe keeping (1 Sam. ii. 9; Jude 24). III. THE BELIEVER'S SONG. 1. The song of reconciliation (Isa. xii. 1). 2. The song of deliverance (Ex. xv. 1-19). 3. The song of victory (2 Chron. xx. 17-26). IV. THE BELIEVER'S INFLUENCE. 1. "Many shall see it" (Matt. v. 16). 2. "Many shall fear" (Acts ii. 37, 43). 3. "Many shall trust in the Lord" (Acts ii. 41). (E. H. Hopkins.) *The pit of destruction*:—It is possible that the reference may be to a mode of hunting, anciently practised in the East, and still practised in some parts of the East, in the interior of Africa, and in some of the Polynesian Islands. When a dangerous wild animal was to be captured, a large hole was dug in the ground. At the bottom of the pit thus dug a goat was placed as bait, and the opening of the pit was covered with light branches and foliage. The wild animal, attracted by the bleating of the goat, made a spring in the dark for the goat, fell through the branches, and was securely trapped. From this point of view David had fallen, or been tempted into, a pit of sin; and had been plucked by the mercy of God from the clinging mire of its bottom and the slippery clay of its sides, and placed upon the sure foothold of a rock. **And set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.**—*Fixity and progress*:—What a strange contradiction—rest and movement, fixedness and pliability, steadfastness and variation. How can a man be made to run by his fixedness? How can his power of motion be increased by that which is supposed to rivet him to the spot? In all things of the spirit, is it not ever so? Is not the rapidity of my movement always in proportion to the rootedness of my conviction? The firmer is my rock, the more established are my goings. It is the resting soul which flies. I have no wings until I have a fixed heart. The dove that descends upon the Jordan must first light upon the Son of Man. Is it not written (Isa. xl. 31)? What is that but to say that the rock makes the outgoing? I never do such work as when I am at rest. It is the calm within makes the power without. The soul whose works have followed it is the spirit of the man who has rested from his labours. (G. Matheson, D.D.)

Ver. 3. **And He hath put a new song in my mouth.**—*The new song on earth:*—I. We have here a MAN WONDERING TO FIND HIMSELF SINGING. God had put a new song into his mouth, and it was a marvel even to himself. What makes you wonder so? Other people sing: why is it at all a wonder that you should? He answers, "It is a wonder that I should sing, because I have been so used to sighing. I had my evening moans and groans, for sin was heavy upon me, and an angry God seemed to make the darkness about me a darkness that might be felt. Had you seen me then, you would not think it strange that I should be a wonder to myself that now I sing." Well, I can see why you are astonished at your singing; is there any other reason? "Yes," he answers, "if you had known me a little farther back, before I came under the hand of God, and was awakened to a sense of sin, you would have known a fellow that could sing; but the wonder now is that I can sing 'a new song.' I am glad, sir, that you did not hear me sing in those days, for my songs would have done you no good. It is not only called a new song because it is new to us, but because it is so uncommon. Rich and rare things are often called in the Bible new. There is a new covenant, a new commandment, etc. And, oh, the praises of God are indeed rich and rare! And, truth to tell, there is a wonder about our new song because it is always new. Do you ever tire—you who love your Lord—do you ever tire of Him? You who praise Him, do you ever weary of singing His praises? II. We have here a MAN WHO IS RESOLVED TO KEEP ON SINGING, for, you notice, he says, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord"; so that this man means to keep on singing. I must have you back again, old friend, and ask you why it is that you mean to keep on singing. He answers, first, "Because I cannot help it." When God sets a man singing, he must sing. Good Rowland Hill once had sitting on the pulpit-stairs a person who sang with such a cracked, squeaking voice that it put the dear man out of heart; and this person with the cracked voice of course sang more loudly than anybody else. So Mr. Hill said to him, while the hymn was being sung, "Be quiet, my good man, you make such a dreadful noise that you put us all out." "Oh!" said the man, "I am singing from my heart, Mr. Hill." "I beg your pardon, my friend," said the preacher, "go on, go on, go on with your singing if it comes from your heart." So we would not stop any man, whatever his voice is, if he sings from his heart. But do not sing before everybody; perhaps it would be casting pearls before swine. "Oh!" says he, "but I must; I mean to sing before many." Why? "Well, I used to sing before many in my evil days. I was not ashamed to sing for the devil. When I ought to have been ashamed I was not; and now that I ought not to be ashamed, I will not be ashamed, and I will sing. Besides, why should I be so tender and considerate of their nerves? They are not thoughtful about mine." Still, do you think that it is worth while to sing at this rate? "Yes," says he, "I do, for I believe that it is good for them to hear it." Do you? What good can it do them? And he answers me thus. "Look at your text, sir, and you will not need to ask me that question; what does your text say?" "Many shall see, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The saved man's new song:*—When Charles Wesley was impressed with the thought that he ought to live a different life to that which he was living, a more distinctly Christian life—he was anxious from this very point to get a satisfactory answer to the question, "Is it necessary to acknowledge Christ openly, to tell to people that I am a Christian?" And, walking in the streets one day, he met a holy, saintly Moravian minister, and he asked him, in the course of conversation, "Is it really necessary that I should openly confess Christ?" That good, blessed man said to him, "If you had a thousand tongues, use them all in telling of your Saviour." Well, he sought and found the great blessing of peace through Jesus Christ; and then you know what followed, and what always comes in Christian experience. He did not need to ask men whether he should tell others that he had found the pearl of great price; he sat down, and he wrote that hymn—

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The riches of His grace!

**Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.**—*The power of a good life:*—We are not alone in anything we do. We are connected from the cradle

to the grave with many others. We have our family, and our kindred, our social friends, our business connections, our neighbours and fellow-citizens. Upon all these we exercise influence, both consciously and unconsciously. By our uprightness they are strengthened, by our courage they are cheered, by our perseverance they are confirmed in the love of right. Every person is thus a preacher to his neighbour; and the most powerful of all eloquence is the eloquence of a virtuous life. It is a testimony to the whole world that religion is not utopian. It can be practised and realized; for here it is done. When a parent adds to the gentle precepts of true religion delivered to his children, the practice of a just, a patient, loving life, he preaches to his household in golden words. When a Christian tradesman shows a spirit of honour and rectitude in his dealings, a desire to afford full justice to his customer, as well as to himself, he preaches with the utmost force the sermon, "Go thou and do likewise." The best sermon any one can preach on patience is actual calmness under provocation. The preaching of truly good lives is what the world now most needs. It is the one sweet note having the power to reduce to harmony all the discords of mankind. (*J. Bailey, Ph.D.*)

**Ver. 4. Blessed is the man who maketh the Lord his trust.**—*The blessedness of making the Lord our trust*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED BY OUR TRUST. 1. That it rests in the Lord Himself. 2. It sets aside all self-confidence. II. SOME REASONS WHY THE MAN WHO MAKES THE LORD HIS TRUST IS BLESSED. 1. He acts in accordance with the Divine will. 2. There is stability in his trust; you may always depend upon it. 3. It bestows true manly dignity and freedom from all servile fears. 4. It gives quiet composure to the mind. (*W. H. Horwood.*) *The Lord our trust*:—The psalmist here expresses—I. A PECULIAR HABIT OF MIND. What is implied in trusting in God? 1. A knowledge of His character. 2. It implies the consciousness of reconciliation. 3. Obedience. 4. Piety or devotion. II. THE HAPPINESS CONNECTED WITH THIS TRUST IN THE LORD. 1. See it by way of contrast. For how insufficient and unstable are the objects in which the world trusts. Riches, skill, virtue and the like. 2. In the perfections of the God in whom we trust. Think of all His attributes and each will minister to this happiness. 3. In what is prepared for such, both here and hereafter. (*W. Wright.*) *Faith commended*:—I. FAITH HAS THE DIVINE APPROVAL. Wherever there is faith God is pleased with it. He has made it the main requirement of His gospel. It is the one thing needful in prayer. It is the mode and manner of the spiritual life, for "the just shall live by faith." II. THIS IS HIGHLY REASONABLE. We love to be trusted, and are much troubled when we are not. It is our proper position towards God, and it supplies the link between us and Himself. The complete confidence of the heart is the essence of obedience and the fountain of it. And it is no objection that faith, trust, seems such a small matter. But within the compass of it there lies a force whose power would be difficult to measure. It is a virtue which contains within it seed enough to sow all the acreage of life with holiness. III. AND FAITH IS BLESSEDNESS. For in trouble it assures us that "all things work together for good." And it releases from trouble. Read this psalm. It creates within him a deep peace and a holy elevation of character. We put down our foot on what seems thin as air and, behold, it is firm as a rock beneath us. But some one says, "I could not live with nothing to depend upon." Is God nothing? The believer has nothing more, and what does he want more? And faith makes blessed in death. For the believer knows he cannot truly die. If ye will believe, ye shall have both heaven on earth and heaven in heaven. God uplift us from the miry clay of unbelief to the rock of confidence in Him." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Trust in the Lord—the only way to happiness*:—"As happy as a king" is a common phrase; but history almost seems to say, "As miserable as a king." In his last will Henry IV. spoke most sadly of his life, which he had "misspended." The last words of Henry VIII. were, "All is lost." "I, Eleanor, by the wrath of God, Queen of England," so wrote Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of Henry II. Queen Mary begged that, when she died, not even the semblance of a crown might be put upon her brow. "I am weary of my life," said Queen Elizabeth to the French ambassador. And in the present time we have all seen how much there is in the lot of the Czar of all the Russias that none of us would like.—True happiness can never be realized, either by king or peasant, apart from God, and the wise king said very truly, "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he."

**Ver. 5. Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done,**

and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee.—*God's wonderful works and thoughts to us-ward*.—I. LET US RECALL SOME OF THE WONDROUS WORKS AND THOUGHTS OF GOD TO US-WARD DURING THE YEAR. 1. The first wondrous mercy is life itself. How wonderful is life! We lavish upon it our choicest and fondest expressions. With what jealous care we guard it. What are all our daily toil and efforts but a battle for life! When the last stroke seems about to fall, how do we quiver and weep! When that stroke is suspended, what joy thrills through our frame! Life with its five mysterious senses—life, with its powers of knowing—life, with its susceptibilities of loving and aspiring—life, with its sublime sense of duty, and with its affections and hopes that soar towards God and heaven—is a treasure that makes the weakest man the possessor of boundless wealth. But life is not more sweet and precious than it is frail. At any moment the small dust of the balance may turn the scale against us. A slight pressure of the brain, a pause of the breath, and all is over. Life is a frail ship that ploughs the great ocean amidst hurricanes and lightnings, by quicksands and rocks. How wonderful is it that this frail ship should sail for twenty, forty, seventy years—that this breath should flow on—this flower bloom, not for one, but for many years! 2. We have another illustration of the wonderful works and thoughts of God to us-ward, in the means of life and the comforts of life. Life hangs on the power of God, and no means can give life one moment longer beyond God's will; but life cannot be maintained without means, and those means of life are truly wonderful. The head of a family knows best how much work and thought must go to the getting of food and raiment and other needful things for the children. But what are his work and thought to the work and thought of the great Father of all for each of His children? Think of what is needed for each harvest; what exact adjustment of natural laws so as to suit the different stages of the plant. And these wondrous works of God are not mere works without soul in them. They are His thoughts also. We do not praise the earth, or the clouds, or the sun, but we thank God. But I would notice as the crowning example of God's many and wonderful works and thoughts to us-ward. 3. His works and thoughts in regard to the supreme purpose and aim of life. Life and the means of life are not the end, they are only the means of a greater end. They only give us a basis. We still want a structure to be built upon them. And our Father in heaven knows that the gift of bealth and life and all temporal blessings will be no blessing, but only a curse to us, unless we rear upon these the structure of right principles, and holy affections, and Christian usefulness—in a word, all the work of faith, and hope, and charity. He has destined us for these as our chief end. II. THE GOOD EFFECTS WHICH SHOULD FOLLOW SUCH A REVIEW OF GOD'S WORKS. 1. There should be grateful acknowledgment of His mercies. Gratitude ploughs up the field which is to others only a barren waste, and plants it, and keeps it fresh and green with its tears of joy. The whole past life is the field which it ploughs up, and out of which it makes to spring all that can refresh and strengthen us. 2. The grateful review of the Divine works of mercy will inspire us likewise to be workers of good—to be good, like Him, that we may be His children—to be merciful as our Father is merciful. 3. Lastly, let the grateful review of the wondrous works of God to us-ward produce in us, not only the works of mercy, but the thoughts also of mercy, the spirit of mercy and charity. (*J. Riddell.*) *Two innumerable things* (with ver. 12):—So, then, there are two series of things which cannot be numbered. God's mercies; man's sin. We always should begin with grateful remembrance of God's mercy. His wondrous dealings seem to the psalmist's thankful heart as numberless as the blades of grass which carpet the fields. They come pouring out continuously, like the innumerable undulations of the ether which make upon the eyeballs the single sensation of light. He thinks not only of God's wonderful works, His realized purposes of mercy, but of "His thoughts which are to us-ward," the purposes, still more wonderful, of a yet greater mercy which wait to be realized. As he thinks of all this "multitude of His tender mercies," his lips break into this rapturous exclamation of my text. But there is a wonderful change in tone in the two halves of the psalm. The deliverance that seems so complete in the earlier part is but partial. The psalmist sees himself ringed about by numberless evils, as a man tied to a stake might be by a circle of fire. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." His conscience tells him that the evils are deserved; they are his iniquities transformed, which have come back to him in another shape, and have laid their hands upon him as a constable does upon a thief.

"Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me." They hem him in so that his vision is interrupted, the smoke from the circle of flame blinds his eyes. "I cannot see." His roused conscience and his quivering heart conceive of them as "more than the hairs of his head." And so courage and confidence have ebbed away from him. "My heart faileth me," and there is nothing left for him but to fling himself in his misery out of himself and on to God. Draw some of the lessons from the very remarkable juxtaposition of these two innumerable things—God's tender mercies, and man's iniquity and evil. I. To begin with, if we keep these two things both together in our contemplations, THEY SUGGEST FOR US VERY FORCIBLY THE GREATEST MYSTERY IN THE UNIVERSE, AND THROW A LITTLE LIGHT UPON IT. The difficulty of difficulties, the one insoluble problem is, given a good and perfect God, where does sorrow come from? And why is there any pain? And men have fumbled at that knot for all the years that there have been men in the world, and they have not untied it yet. Is it true that "God's mercies are innumerable"? If it be, what is the meaning of all this that makes me writhe and weep? Well, when such moments come to us, do not let the black mass hide the light one from you, but copy this psalmist, and in the energy of your faith, even though it be the extremity of your pain, grasp and grip them both; and though you have to say and to wail, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about," be sure that you do not let that prevent you from saying, "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works," etc. Remember, the one does not contradict the other; and let us ask ourselves if the one does not explain the other. If it be that these mercies are so innumerable as my first text says, may it not be that they go deep down beneath, and include in their number the thing that seems most opposite to them, even the sorrow that afflicts our lives? "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," makes a bridge across the gulf which seems to part the opposing cliffs these two sets effect, and turn the darker into a form in which the brighter reveals itself. God's innumerable mercies include the whole sum total of my sorrows. II. THE BLENDING OF THESE TWO THOUGHTS TOGETHER HEIGHTENS THE IMPRESSION OF EACH. All artists, and all other people know the power of contrast. White never looks so white as when it is relieved against black; black never so intense as when it is relieved against white. Only observe that, whilst the psalmist starts from the "innumerable evils" that have compassed him about, he passes from these to the earlier evils which he had done. It is pains that says, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." It is conscience that says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me." His wrongdoing has come back to him like the boomerang that the Australian savage throws, which may strike its aim but returns to the hand that flung it. It has come back in the shape of a sorrow. And so "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me" is the deepening of the earliest word of my text. God's mercies never seem so fair, so wonderful, as when they are looked at in conjunction with man's sin. Man's sin never seems so foul and hideous as when it is looked at close against God's mercies. You cannot estimate the conduct of one or two parties to a transaction unless you have the conduct of the other before you. You cannot understand a father's love unless you take into account the prodigal son's sullen unthankfulness, or his unthankfulness without remembering his father's love. So we do not see the radiant brightness of God's lovingkindness to us until we look at it from the depth of the darkness of our own sin. The stars are seen from the bottom of the well. Man's sin has heightened God's love to this climax and consummation of all tenderness, that He has sent us His Son. Man's darkest sin is the rejection of Christ. The clearest light makes the blackest shadow; the tenderer the love, the more criminal the apathy and selfishness which opposes it. III. THE KEEPING OF THESE TWO THOUGHTS TOGETHER SHOULD LEAD US ALL TO CONSCIOUS PENITENCE. The psalmist's words are not the mere complaint of a soul in affliction, but they are also the acknowledgment of a conscience repenting. In like manner the contemplation of these two numberless series should affect us all. It is a very defective kind of religion that says, "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy thoughts which are to us-ward"; but has never been down on its knees with the confession, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me." But defective as it is, it is all the religion which many people have. I would press on you all this truth, that there is no deep personal religion without a deep consciousness of personal transgression. Have you ever known what it is so to look at God's love that it smites you into tears of repentance when you think of the way you have requited Him? I, therefore, urge this upon you that, for the vigour of your own



personal religion, you must keep these two things well together. IV. LOOKING AT THESE TWO NUMBERLESS SERIES TOGETHER WILL BRING INTO THE DEEPEST PENITENCE A JOYFUL CONFIDENCE. There are regions of experience the very opposite of that error of which I have just been speaking. There are some of us, perhaps, who have so profound a sense of their own shortcomings and sins that the mists rising from these have blurred the sky to them and shut out the sun. Some of you, perhaps, may be saying to yourselves that you cannot get hold of God's love because your sin seems to you to be so great, or may be saying to yourselves that it is impossible that you should ever get the victory over this evil of yours because it has laid hold upon you with so tight a grasp. If there be any inclination to doubt the infinite love of God, or the infinite possibility of cleansing from all sin, bind these two texts together, and never so look at your own evil as to lose sight of the infinite mercy of God. It is safe to say—aye! it is blessed to say—"Mine iniquities are more than the hairs of mine head," when we can also say, "Thy thoughts to me are more than can be numbered." There are not two innumerable series, there is only one. There is a limit and a number to my sins and to yours, but God's mercies are properly numberless. My sins may be as the sand which is by the sea-shore, innumerable, the love of God in Jesus Christ is like the great sea which rolls over the sands and buries them. My sins may rise mountains high, but His mercies are a great deep which will cover the mountains to their very summit. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The marvel of God's thoughts*:—Phillips Brooks thus seizes and emphasizes the message of the spring. "When the spring comes, the oak-tree with its thousands upon thousands of leaves blossoms all over. The great heart of the oak-tree remembers every remotest tip of every farthest branch, and sends to each the message and the power of new life. And yet we do not think of the heart of the oak-tree as if it were burdened with such multitudinous remembrance, or as if it were any harder work for it to make a million leaves than it would be to make one. It is simply the thrill of the common life translated into these million forms. The great heart beats, and wherever the channels of a common life are standing open the rich blood flows, and out on every tip the green leaf springs. Somewhat in that way it seems to me that we may think of God's remembrance of His million children."

Vers. 6, 7. **Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required.** Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.—*Christ the only sufficient sacrifice*:—Among the many irrefragable proofs that we belong to a fallen race, is the misconception which men have put upon the clearest revelations of the Divine will. The Lord had appointed that, in their approaches to Him, the Israelites should offer sacrifices as an acknowledgment that their sins could not be remitted without the shedding of blood. The sacrifices both made clear expression of the fearful guilt of sin, and foreshadowed the atonement Christ should make for the transgressions of His people. But the Jews, as a nation, were not impressed with horror of sin, neither were their thoughts led forward to the promised Redeemer. In their shameful misconceptions of the Divine character, they often impiously imagined that, if any of them committed a trespass, he had no more to do than to kill a bullock or a sheep, in sacrifice, and his guilt would be forgiven him. I. **WHAT KIND OF ATONEMENT is required.** It must be costly, for man's guilt is great. Hence—1. It must be equivalent in value to the souls of the redeemed. Such is the stern doom of justice: else man cannot be saved. 2. There must be a connection between those for whom the atonement is offered and the party who suffers. 3. He who was to die for man must be innocent. No halt or maimed victim could be accepted in the ancient sacrifices: it must be perfect. But how could man furnish a perfect sacrifice for sin? 4. The victim must be willing. An involuntary, forced sacrifice would be cruel tyranny. II. **HOW ALL THE QUALITIES REQUISITE FOR A PERFECT ATONEMENT HAVE MET IN CHRIST.** 1. There was sufficiency in value, for Christ was the Son of God. 2. He had connection with these for whom He died; for He was man as well as God. 3. He was perfectly innocent—"He did no sin." 4. He was a willing victim. (*George Innes.*) *Jesus the true Messiah*:—I. It is intimated that, whenever the Messiah should come, THE SACRIFICES AND CEREMONIES OF THE MOSAIC LAW WERE TO BE SUPERSEDED BY HIM. Jewish writers contend for the perpetuity of the ceremonial as well as of the moral law; but in this they are opposed, both by Scripture and by fact. 1. As to Scripture (1 Sam. xv. 22; Ps. i. 7-15; li. 16, 17;

Isa. i. 11, 12; Jer. vii. 21-23; Dan. ix. 27; Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Heb. viii. 13; x. 17, 18). 2. Whether Messiah the Prince be come or not, sacrifice and oblation have ceased. We believed they virtually ceased when Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice, and in a few years after they actually ceased. II. It is suggested that, whenever Messiah should come, **THE GREAT BODY OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN HIM.** "In the volume," etc. 1. The time when Messiah should come is clearly marked out in prophecy (Gen. xlix. 10; Hag. ii. 6-9; Dan. ix. 24-27). 2. The place where Messiah should be born, and where He should principally impart His doctrine, is determined (Micah, v. 2; Isa. ix. 2). 3. The house or family from whom Messiah should descend is clearly ascertained. 4. The kind of miracles that Messiah should perform is specified (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6). 5. It was predicted of Messiah that He should, as a King, be distinguished by His lowliness, entering into Jerusalem, not in a chariot of state, but in a much humbler style (Zech. ix. 9). 6. It is predicted of Messiah that He should suffer and die by the hands of wicked men (Isa. xlix. 7; lili. 14, 15, liii.; Dan. ix. 26). 7. It was foretold that the Messiah, after being cut off out of the land of the living and laid in the grave, should rise from the dead. 8. It was foretold that the great body of the Jewish nation would not believe in Him; and that He would set up His kingdom among the Gentiles (Isa. liii. 1; xlix. 4-6). III. It is declared, that when the Messiah should come, **THE WILL OF GOD WOULD BE PERFECTLY FULFILLED BY HIM.** "I delight to do Thy will." The will of God sometimes denotes what He approves, and sometimes what He appoints. The first is the rule of our conduct, the last of His own; and both we affirm to have been fulfilled by Jesus. (A. Fuller.) "*Lo, I come*":—I. **THE SWEEPING AWAY OF THE SHADOW.** 1. When the Son of God is born into the world, there is an end of all types by which He was formerly prefigured. When the heart is gone out of the externals of worship, they are as shells without the kernel. Habitations without living tenants soon become desolations, and so do forms and ceremonies without their spiritual meaning. Toward the time of our Lord's coming, the outward worship of Judaism became more and more dead: it was time that it was buried. 2. As these outward things vanish, they go away with God's mark of non-esteem upon them: they are such things as He did not desire. The spiritual, the infinite, the almighty Jehovah could not desire merely outward ritual, however it might appear glorious to men. The sweetest music is not for His ear, nor the most splendid robes of priests for His eye. He desired something infinitely more precious than these, and He puts them away with this note of dissatisfaction. 3. They were so put away as never to be followed by the same kind of things. Shadows are not replaced by other shadows. II. **THE REVELATION OF THE SUBSTANCE.** 1. The Lord Himself comes, even He who is all that these things foreshadowed. (1) When He comes He has a prepared ear. The margin hath it, "*Mine ears hast Thou digged.*" Our ears often need digging; for they are blocked up by sin. The passage to the heart seems to be sealed in the case of fallen man. But when the Saviour came, His ear was not as ours, but was attentive to the Divine voice. (2) He came also with a prepared body (Heb. x. 5). 2. He who assumed that body was existent before that body was prepared. He says, "*A body hast Thou prepared me. Lo, I come.*" He from old eternity dwelt with God: the Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God. He was before all worlds, and was before He came into the world to dwell in His prepared body. 3. The human nature of Christ was taken on Him in order that He might be able to do for us that which God desired and required. An absolutely perfect righteousness He renders unto God; as the second Adam, He presents it for all whom He represents. III. **THE DECLARATION OF THE CHRIST MADE IN THE TEXT.** "*Lo, I come.*" 1. Observe when He says this. It is in the time of failure. 2. When our Lord comes, it is with the view of filling up the vacuum which had now been sorrowfully seen. He gives to man in reality what he had lost in the shadow. 3. When He appears, it is as the personal Lord—the Infinite Ego. Everything is stored up in His blessed person, and we are complete in Him. 4. Observe the joyful avowal that He makes. This is no dirge; I think I hear a silver trumpet ring out, "*Lo, I come.*" 5. He comes with a word calling attention to it; for He is not ashamed to be made partaker of our flesh. Others have cried to you, "*Lo, here! and Lo, there*"; but Jesus looks on you, and cries, "*Lo, I come.*" Look hither; turn all your thoughts this way, and behold your God in your nature ready to save you. 6. I hear in this declaration of the coming One a note of finality. He is the fulfilment of all the requirements of the human

race, as well as the full amount of what God requires. IV. THE REFERENCE TO PRECEDING WRITINGS. He says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." If I preached from the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, I might fairly declare that in the whole volume of Holy Scripture much is written of our Lord and prescribed for Him as Messiah. Preaching as I am from the Psalms, I cannot take so long a range. I must look back and find what was written in David's day, and within the Pentateuch certainly; and whoso do I find it written concerning His coming? The Pentateuch drips with prophecies of Christ as a honeycomb overflowing with its honey. V. THE DELIGHT OF HIM THAT COMETH. 1. He came in complete subservency to His Father. Though high as the highest, He stooped low as the lowest. 2. He had a prospective delight as to His work (Prov. viii. 31). 3. He had an actual delight in His coming among men. To Him it was joy to be in sorrow, and honour to be put to shame. Do you think that lightens our estimate of His self-denial and disinterestedness? Nay, it adds weight to it. Some people fancy that there is no credit in doing a thing unless you are miserable in doing it. Nay, that is the very reverse. Obedience which is unwillingly offered and causes no joy in the soul, is not acceptable. We must serve God with our heart, or we do not serve Him. 4. Need I tell you what must be the delight, the heavenly joy of our Lord, now that the work is finished? He is now the focus, the centre, the source of bliss. What must be His own delight! We often say of the angels that they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. What means the presence of the angels? Why, that the angels see the joy of Christ when sinners repent. (O. H. Spurgeon.) "Lo, I come":—The times when our Lord says, "Lo, I come," have all a family likeness. There are certain crystals which assume a regular shape, and if you break them, each fragment will show the same conformation; if you were to dash them to shivers, every particle of the crystal would be still of the same form. Now, the goings forth of Christ which were of old, and His coming at Calvary, and that great advent when He shall come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness, all these have a likeness the one to the other. But there is a coming of what I may call a lesser sort, when Jesus cries, "Lo, I come" to each individual sinner, and brings a revelation of pardon and salvation; and this has about it much which is similar to the great ones. I. THE LORD CHRIST HAS TIMES OF HIS FIRST COMINGS TO MEN; "Then said I, Lo, I come." What are these times? Mayhap some here have reached this season, and this very day is the time of blessing when the text shall be fulfilled: "Then said I, Lo, I come." Go with me to the first record in the volume of the Book, when it was said that He should come. You will find it in the early chapter of Genesis. 1. Jesus said, "Lo, I come," when man's probation was a failure. "Adam being in honour continued not." At that point we read in the volume of the Book that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Then our Redeemer said, "Lo, I come." Harken to me; you also have had your probation, as you have thought it to be. 2. When man's clever dealings with the devil had turned out a great failure. 3. When man's covering was a failure. 4. When all man's pleas were failures. 5. When man's religion had proved a failure. II. CHRIST COMES TO SINNERS IN THE GLOBE OF HIS PERSON. "Lo, I come." What does He mean? 1. He means the setting of all else on one side. 2. Before Him there is a setting of self aside. Lo, he comes to clothe you from head to foot with His own seamless robe of righteousness. He annihilates self that He may fill all things. 3. Here is a glorious setting of Himself at our side and in our place. Jesus is now the one pillar on which to lean, the one foundation on which to build, the one and only rest of our weary souls. 4. He sets Himself where we can see Him; for he cries, "Lo, I come"; that is to say, "See Me come." He comes openly, that we may see Him clearly. 5. Our Lord sets Himself to be permanently our all in all. When He came on earth, He did not leave His work till He had finished it. Even when He rose to glory, He continued His service for His chosen, living to intercede for them. Jesus will be a Saviour until all the chosen race shall have been gathered home. III. CHRIST, IN HIS COMING, IS HIS OWN INTRODUCTION. 1. Here our Lord is His own herald. "Lo, I come." He bids you look on Him when you beseech Him to look on you. 2. He comes when quite unsought or sought for in a wrong way. "Lo, I come," is the announcement of majestic grace which waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. 3. Our Lord Jesus is the way to Himself. 4. He is the blessing which He brings. 5. He is His own spokesman. IV. CHRIST, TO CHEER US, REVEALS HIS REASONS FOR

COMING. 1. It is His Father's will. 2. His own heart is set on you. 3. You have need, and He has love, and so He comes. V. CHRIST'S COMING IS THE BEST PLEA FOR OUR RECEIVING HIM, AND RECEIVING HIM NOW. Receive Him! If you are in yourself sadly unready, yet He Himself will make everything ready for Himself. Shut not out your own mercy. A pastor in Edinburgh, in going round his district, knocked at the door of a poor woman, for whom he had brought some needed help; but he received no answer. When next he met her, he said to her, "I called on Tuesday at your house." She asked, "At what time?" "About eleven o'clock; I knocked, and you did not answer. I was disappointed, for I called to give you help." "Ah, sir!" said she, "I am very sorry. I thought it was the man coming for the rent, and I could not pay it, and therefore I did not dare to go to the door." Many a troubled soul thinks that Jesus is one who comes to ask of us what we cannot give; but indeed He comes to give us all things. His errand is not to condemn, but to forgive. (*Ibid.*) *Delight to do the will of God*.—I. SOME CASES IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN DELIGHTS TO DO THE WILL OF GOD. 1. In the acts and offices of religious worship. 2. In the faithful discharge of those duties which he owes to his fellow-creatures. 3. In the good government of himself, and the practice of temperance and self-denial. II. SOME OF THE CHIEF FRUITS OR EFFECTS OF IT. 1. Cheerfulness, an habitual vivacity and gladness of heart in the exercise of our moral and religious duties, both in the time of our wealth and in the time of suffering and tribulation. 2. A firm confidence in God's protection and goodness, a cheerful apprehension of His perpetual presence and overruling providence, and a deep-rooted persuasion of His merciful disposition towards us, and of the truth and excellence of His promises. 3. A humble but stedfast hope of everlasting happiness, grounded on His promises in Christ, and brought home to the mind of the believer in the way of just inference and reasonable collection. (*Bishop Bethell.*) *Christ's delight in the work of redemption*.—I. WHY IT OUGHT TO BE A PLEASANT AND GRATEFUL THING TO CHRIST TO TAKE A BODY OF FLESH AND LAY IT DOWN BY DEATH AGAIN FOR THE REDEMPTION OF SINNERS. 1. It became Christ to go about this work with cheerfulness and delight, that thereby He might give His death the nature and formality of a sacrifice. 2. It ought to be so in regard of the unity of Christ's will with the Father's. The work of our redemption is called "the pleasure of the Lord" (Isa. liii. 10), and what was the Father's pleasure could not be displeasing to Him who is one with the Father. 3. This was necessary to magnify and commend the love of Jesus Christ to us, for whom He gave Himself. That He came into the world to die for us is a mercy of the first magnitude, but that He came in love to our souls, and underwent all His sufferings with such willingness for our sakes, this heightens it above all apprehension. 4. It was necessary to be so for the regulating of all our obedience to God according to this pattern, that seeing and setting this great example of obedience before us, we might never grudge nor grumble at any duty or suffering that God should call us to. II. WHENCE IT CAME TO BE SO PLEASANT AND ACCEPTABLE TO JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO THE WORLD AND DIE FOR POOR SINNERS. 1. That in His sufferings there would be made a glorious display and manifestation of the Divine attributes; yea, such a glorious display of them as was never made before to angels or to men, nor ever shall be any more in this world. (1) For though the wisdom of God had made itself visible to men in the creation of the world, yet there it shone, but in a faint and languishing beam compared with this. (2) The love of God had appeared before in our creation, protection and provision, yet nothing to what it doth in our redemption by the death of Christ. (3) God had given several sad marks of His justice before, both upon the angels that fell, and in the overthrow of Sodom, etc.; yet never was the exactness and severity of justice so manifested before, nor ever shall be any more, as it was at the death of Christ. 2. Another delightful prospect Christ had of the fruit of His sufferings was the recovery and salvation of all the elect by His death; and though His sufferings were exceeding bitter, yet such fruit of them as this was exceeding sweet; upon this account He assumed his name Jesus (Matt. i. 21), yea, and His human nature also (Gal. iv 4, 5). 3. The glory which would redound to Him from His redeemed ones to all eternity; for it will be the everlasting pleasant employment of the saints in heaven to be ascribing glory, praise and honour to the Redeemer. (*John Flavel.*)

Ver. 8. I delight to do Thy will, O my God.—*Duty a delight*.—"I delight to do Thy will, O my God." In other words, God's pleasure is his pleasure. "Yea,

Thy law is within my heart," the object of choice and love. I. We instinctively recognize here AN EXPRESSION OF THE HIGHEST TYPE OF PIETY. This marks the psalm as Messianic, since it was fulfilled only in Christ. The piety here breathed is not to be thought of as beyond the imitation of every disciple. Jesus stands as the Divine model and pattern of a believer's life. When we look at the believer's experience we find it in three stages. First, a sense of danger, when fear rouses him to flee from the wrath to come; then a sense of duty, when conscience urges him to do that which he feels to be right; and last, a sense of delight, when choice impels him to do and bear God's will. Duty has become delight. This last stage of experience is the highest, and heaven only is higher. II. TO DELIGHT IN GOD'S WILL SUPPLIES THE NOBLEST MOTIVE. The roads of duty and delight never cross each other. Piety is not so much any conformity of outward life, as it is a disposition toward the divine, which, in a growing Christian will become more and more habitual as a law of life, and in a sense unconscious. A young disciple is like the musical pupil, who, in playing his exercises, keeps thinking how he is sitting, holding his hands, and managing his fingers. The mature disciple is more like the master in whom practice and habit have made it possible to lose sight of what is merely mechanical in what is spiritual about music, till he forgets the instrument in the inspiration of musical enthusiasm, and becomes no longer merely a practiser of scales or an imitator of others, but a creator and composer of musical harmonies. He who makes it his habit to aim after true holiness will find more and more that it ceases to be an effort to be good and to do good, as he rises to real and almost unconscious sympathy with goodness. III. The text expresses also THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL LIBERTY. In civil government, the nearer we get to a true idea or ideal of liberty, the less does government seem to exist at all, for the highest freedom involves unconsciousness of restraint or constraint. The Christian is the Lord's freeman; it is the sinner who is wearing a yoke of bondage; and he who has escaped the obedience of fear and learned the subjection of love enjoys the highest liberty of the sons of God. And we misrepresent Christianity before others whenever we lead them to suppose that it rules by the iron sceptre of duty. He who will surrender himself completely to its way shall find the Christian experience such a blending of God's life with man's life as maketh His will our will, and His service perfect freedom! IV. The text expresses THE TRUEST PREPARATION FOR A LIFE OF SERVICE TO CHRIST. When duty becomes delight we are fitted for our highest usefulness, for that is inseparable from the highest piety, the noblest motive, and the truest liberty. Those who most win souls are those who delight to do God's will. If others see that it makes us happy to be disciples of Christ, that we are under no constraint, galled by no fetters of conscience, confined by no severe restrictions; that we are simply walking at liberty because we love to do God's will, we become to them living epistles. Men may feel little interest in hearing another say what he is forced to utter because he feels that he ought; but no man will lack attentive audience who speaks from a full heart, which would burst if denied expression. Ordinarily a sculptor does not himself work the marble: he fashions the clay model, leaving to the mechanical workman to work out in stone what he has not the imagination to invent, or think out in mind. What a wide difference between them! The workman, for a certain sum, undertakes the task of giving to the creation of the artist's genius simply a more enduring form. He feels, perhaps, but little interest in his wearisome work. His aim at most is to be rigidly accurate and correct in copying the model. Everything is done by rule. How different the experience of the sculptor! He finds in his work a rest, a relief. An image is stamped upon his mind, his brain burns, his heart throbs! The Greeks called such a state of mind "enthusiasm"—an inspiration from God. We are too often only the mechanical workmen when we ought to be sculptors of life. V. HELPS TO ATTAINING DELIGHT IN DUTY. 1. We must habituate ourselves to think of God's law in its true light. We do great injustice to Him when we construe the rule of duty as an arbitrary regulation. The more we learn to interpret His commands by His benevolence the more shall we delight to do His will. 2. There must be holy fellowship with God. No unregenerate man can know such experience of delight in duty, for it is born only of the Spirit. 3. There must be a full surrender to God. No man delights to do God's will whose whole will is not given up to God. 4. Duty will become delight in proportion to our faithful discharge of duty itself. The more complete your obedience, the more positive your happiness. We are reminded of the beautiful myth about the "wingless birds," who first took

up their wings as burdens to be borne, but found them changing to pinions, which, in the end, bore them. We are the birds without wings. God puts our duties before us to be patiently assumed for His sake. But, though at first they are loads, we shall be able afterwards to say, with Rutherford, "The cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore: such a burden as wings are to the bird," that help it to soar; "or, as sails are to the ship," that help it to catch the breeze that wafts it to the desired haven. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The will—before, in, and after conversion:*—The Word of God presents to us the action of the will during three phases of experience: first, during that period in which man asserts his independence, and refuses to submit to the claims and authority of God; secondly, during the period of transition, in which he is abandoning his claims to independence, and is learning to submit to the yoke of Christ; thirdly, during the subsequent period of self-surrender and self-consecration. I. **THE WILL BEFORE CONVERSION.** "God is not in all his thoughts." "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Man may be unconscious of the enmity, but it surely exists; and there needs only an authoritative assertion of the Divine will to provoke the human will and call it into action. II. **THE WILL IN CONVERSION.** How does a man pass from a state of active or passive antagonism to the will of God into one of holy and willing conformity to that will? It is difficult to answer this question in few words. Whilst every true conversion is one in its essential features, as involving the active turning to God in repentance and faith, conversions vary greatly in the causes which lead to them and in the phases through which they pass. Thus, it is difficult to define with any accuracy the precise action of the will in conversion. It is important, however, to recognize in the process the existence and activity of two forces: that of Divine grace, and that of human effort. It is the magnet of the Cross which draws men's hearts to God; "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." It is the supreme love of Jesus Christ living, labouring, suffering, dying for sinful men, which touches the heart, attracts the affections and expels the old love of the world by introducing a higher and more absorbing love in its place. The heart thus won, the will resumes its rightful authority. 1. The choice now made is free, for it is the choice of the will acting without compulsion, choosing that which it approves as the noblest and the best. 2. The choice is decided, for it recognizes the righteousness of God's claim upon the unconditional submission and allegiance of man. 3. The choice is lasting, for being made after full consideration and without reserve, it knows no regrets, and has in it all the elements of permanency. III. **THE WILL AFTER CONVERSION.** Scripture teaches and experience proves that by reason of the law of sin yet abiding in our members we cannot always do the things that we would; still "to will is present"; "we delight in the law of God after the inward man." The will after conversion, therefore, is no stranger to conflict, for sin yet dwells within; but throughout the struggle with evil it is at one with the will of God; its language is "not my will but Thine be done." (*Sir Emilius Bayley.*)

**Vers. 9, 10. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest.**—*Christian conversation:*—There is a recluse and sequestered piety in the world which shuns expression. It preserves decorum and propriety; but it rarely speaks out for Christ. We are all acquainted with praying, pious, upright people, strict observers of the moral law, who yet have never been heard, at any time, to give utterance to their religious convictions, or to stand forth in defence of the faith against its assailants, or in the way of exhortation to holiness. 1. In this matter our age stands in strong contrast to some former notable periods. In the days of Whitefield and Wesley men everywhere and in all conditions made religion a matter of common converse. Then great reforms took place. The traffic in slaves was stopped; the condition of prisoners improved; Church missions and Sunday-schools were established. Then society was almost universally stirred and excited by the most glorious themes of the Gospel. 2. Observe how desirable in every way is the practice of converse upon the things of God. Christianity is no private monopoly, no exclusive, personal possession. It is a social religion, because it is made to be talked of, and talked into every sphere of life, and to rule and govern them all. 3. It is, then, very clearly our duty to use the faculty of speech for God's glory, for the health and strengthening of human souls. All the processes of building and uprearing in this world are prized by men. But by just so much as souls are

nobler, grander structure than houses or palaces, or bodies, so the vital energy of pure and holy speech, dropped into the outward and inner ears of men, startling, quickening, sobering, prompting, guiding, elevating, sanctifying them, to good resolves, to noble acts, to self-devotion to God and man, to purity, to excellence and heavenly-mindedness; so the work and power of holy speech towers immeasurably above all the constructive work of architects and builders in this outward, visible world. 4. You tell me it is hard to talk about religion. Many people are reluctant and unwilling to speak concerning this most sacred of all themes, lest they should be betrayed into a habit of cant; which is the simulation of feeling when one has no feeling. Others are afraid of becoming flippant about holy things. And, first let me say there can be no general rule given concerning religious conversation. Perhaps the nearest approach one can make to a precept are the words of St. Paul (Col. iv. 6). That is, our conversation should be saturated with pious and religious prudence flowing from the Holy Spirit. In ordinary conversation we should talk with such a sense of sacred propriety, with such Christian cheerfulness, with such generous courtesy for the opinions and feelings of others, that although the name of Christ be never mentioned, people may gather that we have been with Him, and that His Holy Spirit is the prompter of our life and thought. On the other hand, there are times when our discourse should be most direct and distinct. When we are dealing with the sick, with people who are anxious and inquiring, with indifferent and careless people, then circumlocution or indirection is a great fault. Be faithful to souls, in your conversation as well as in your walk and bearing. But bear in mind two things. (1) That no stilted, formal, unmeaning words on religion will reach any man's soul. If you are not impelled by duty and interest in men to talk with them concerning religious matters, hold your tongue. (2) Join to this the duty of avoiding all debate and wrangling upon religion. The work of Christians is to persuade and invite the careless; not to dispute with them. (*A. Crummell.*) *The Master's profession the disciple's pursuit*:—These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ spoken by Him through the spirit of prophecy in the Old Testament. And—I. OUR LORD DID UNDOUBTEDLY FULFIL THEM. He concentrated every faculty and power to this work; He testified frequently to the greatest crowd. His preaching was never heartless. As if He had said, "Thy righteousness is in my heart, but I have never concealed it there." And He always kept to vital matters—to God and His attributes. "Thy righteousness, Thy faithfulness," etc. II. LET US STRIVE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THE SAME. It is certain that many will never be able to, for in all our churches there is a very large proportion of idle people. I hope they are saved; the Lord knows whether they are or not, but whatever else they are saved from, certainly they are not saved from laziness. They must imagine that they are ornaments, for certainly they are of no use, so far as any good offices are concerned. Nor will cowardly people be able to make this protest. The retiring disposition of many Christians is seen in somewhat the same way as that of the soldier who, when a charge was ordered, felt himself unworthy to be in the front ranks. Nor again will spasmodic people—people who begin things with much zeal, and then drop them. But many men of one talent will. I have known many such—good, earnest, humble, patient, praying toilers, hidden in obscure villages, with an extremely narrow sphere. And some, too, to whom larger talents have been entrusted. Let all such resolve to be able to lay claim to its praise. III. IF WE CAN, MUCH COMFORT ON MANY SOLEMN SUBJECTS WILL BE GAINED. The death of so many unsaved men; their hereafter, so awful; the doom of the heathen, the uprisings of error—for the blame of this will not lie at our door. Now, are not some of you ready to undertake this work of going forth as God's missionaries? In the sight of God ask yourselves—is it not your duty? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation.—*Those who know God will confess Him*:—The psalmist here tells not only of what was an actual fact, but what is more, that he could not help thus testifying of God's salvation. What I propose, accordingly, at the present time, is to speak of the necessary openness of a holy experience; or, in other words, of the impossibility that the inward revelation of God in the soul should be shut up in it, and remain hid or unacknowledged. I shall have in view especially two classes of hearers that are widely distinguished one from the other; first, the class who hide the grace of God in their heart undesignedly, or by reason of some undue modesty; and secondly, the class who, pretending to have it, or consciously having it not, take a pleasure in throwing

discredit on all the appropriate expressions of it, such as are made by the open testimony and formal profession of Christ before men. The former class are certainly blameable in no such sense or degree as the others. They are naturally timorous and self-distrustful persons, it may be, and do not see that they are distrusting God rather than themselves. They seem to themselves to have been truly renewed in the love of God, but they have some doubts, and they make it appear to be wiser that they should not, just now, testify their supposed new experience. In opposition to both these claims we would affirm the necessary openness of a holy experience. For—1. Such experience is even an impulse to self-manifestation, as all love and gratitude are. It wants to speak and declare itself as naturally as a child will utter its first cry. Thus, if one of you had been rescued, in a shipwreck on a foreign shore, by some common sailor who had risked his life to save you, and you should discover him across the street in some great city, you would rush to his side, seize his hand, and begin at once, with a choking utterance, to testify your gratitude to him for so great a deliverance. Or, if you should pass restrainedly on, making no sign, pretending to yourself that you might be wanting in delicacy or modesty to publish your private feelings by any such eager acknowledgment of your deliverer, or that you ought first to be more sure of the genuineness of your gratitude, what opinion must we have, in such a case, of your heartlessness and falseness to nature? In the same way how can the young convert keep from saying, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare," etc. etc. 2. Such an inward change is in its very nature the soul and root of a corresponding outward change. It is the righteousness of God revealed within, to be henceforth the actuating spring and power of a righteous and devoted life. It will inform the whole man. It will glow in the countenance. It will irradiate the eye. It will speak from the tongue. It will modulate the very gait. The good tree will show the good fruit. It cannot go on to bear the old, bad fruit out of modesty, or a pretended shrinking from ostentation; it must reveal the righteousness of God within, by the fruits of righteousness without, else it is only a mockery. 3. If any one proposes beforehand in his religious endeavours, or in seeking after God, to come into a secret experience and keep it a secret, his endeavour is plainly one that falsifies the very notion of Christian piety, and if he succeeds or seems to succeed, he only practises a fraud in which he imposes on himself. 4. It is not less clear, as I have already said incidentally, and now say only more directly, that the grace of God in the heart, unmanifested or kept secret, as many propose that it shall be, even for their whole life, will be certainly stifled and extinguished. The thought itself is a mockery of the Holy Spirit. The heart might as well be required to live and not beat as the new heart of love to hush itself and keep still in the bosom. Nothing can live that is not permitted to show the signs of life. 5. This is the express teaching of the Gospel, which everywhere and in every possible way calls out the souls renewed in Christ to live an open life of sacrifice and duty. He calls upon them to endure hardness, to make a loss of all things for His sake, to be His witnesses before men; leading always the way by their own bold, faithful testimony. The nearest approach to such encouragement anywhere given, is that which is afforded by the case of the two senators, Joseph and Nicodemus. One of them, we are told, was a disciple secretly, for fear of the Jews. And the other came to Jesus by night, to inquire of Him, that he might not be counted a disciple. Both of them appear to have kept silence on His trial before the council, letting the decision go against Him there, and taking no responsibility on His account. But after He was crucified, they came to ask the body, and brought spices to embalm it. They were good, as disciples, to bury Jesus, but not to save His life, or serve Him while living. The truth is, that there is a very heavy shade over these two delicate and courtly friends of Jesus. They were men of society, and therefore saw the dignity of Jesus; but if you would like to be reasonably confident of your salvation, it certainly becomes you to do something a great deal more positive than to let your Master die, making no stand for Him even in the council where His death is voted, and then come in with spices to bury Him. The most fragrant spices are those that honour one's life, and not the posthumous odours that embalm His body. How singular is it, too, that not even the Pentecost calls out these disciples of the tomb. It is as if they had been buried with their Master and had not risen. In that wondrous scene of fellowship, where so many from all parts of the world are surprised to find themselves confessing and embracing, in open brotherhood, strangers of all climes and orders, and selling even their goods to relieve the



common wants, it does not appear that any spices of the heavenly charity are brought in by these two. The real truth is, in respect to almost all these pretenders to a secret religion, that they are persons who know nothing of it. They are moralists, it may be, practising at what they call a virtue by themselves, but they do nothing that brings them into any relationship with God. It is not the righteousness of God which they have hidden so carefully, but it is their own—which, after all, is not hid. What value there may be in discoveries of Christian experience. Some of the best and holiest impulses ever given to the cause of God in men's hearts are given by testimonies of Christian experience. They may be abused, but that is no reason against their proper use. Besides, there is a higher view of these personal testimonies and confessions. All these experiences, or life-histories of the faithful, will be among the grandest studies and most glorious revelations of the future. Exactly as an apostle intimates in those most hopeful, inspiring words of his, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." May He not be glorified in them here, and, in some feeble measure, admired for the testimonies yielded by their experience as their warfare goes on. How many are there in our Christian communities that are living afar off and apparently quite inaccessible, who, if, at a certain time in their life, they had gone forward and taken the places to which they were called, would now be among the shining members of the great body of saints. Then testify freely, act but naturally, live openly the grace that is in you. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*)

Vers. 12-15. **Innumerable evils have compassed me about.**—*Out of the depths.*—**I. A SOUL RESET.** 1. He is made to see the countless number of his sins. It is wonderful what a ray of light will do; the sun suddenly shines into a room, and the whole air seems full of innumerable specks of dust, dancing up and down in the sunbeam. The light does not make the room full of dust; it only shows you what was always there, but which you did not see until the sun shone in; and if a beam of God's true light were to shine into some of your hearts, you would think very differently of yourselves from what you have ever done. I question whether any one among us could bear to see himself as God sees him. 2. He is greatly perplexed by a sort of omnipresence of sin. When conscience wakes up the whole hive of our sins, we find ourselves compassed about with innumerable evils; sins at the board and sins on the bed, sins at the task and sins in the pew, sins in the street and sins in the shop, sins on land and sins at sea, sins of body, soul, and spirit, sins of eye, of lip, of hand, of foot, sins everywhere, every way sins. 3. He is so beset with sin that it seems to hold him in a terrible grip. If you have a number of sins which have once taken hold on you, you will be something like a stag when the whole pack of hounds has seized him, and his neck and his flanks and every bone in him seem to feel the hounds' teeth gnawing at them. **II. A SOUL BEWILDERED.** 1. He did not dare to look his sins in the face. 2. He is unable to excuse himself. 3. He dare not look up to read God's promises. **III. A SOUL FAINTING.** "Free grace and dying love"—I delight to ring those charming bells; oh, that every ear would welcome their blessed music! Poor fainting heart, do thou specially hear the gladsome tidings of free grace and dying love, and catch at the message, and rejoice in Christ to-night! The Lord grant that it may be so! **IV. A SOUL PLEADING.** 1. It is a prayer distinctly to God. 2. It is an appeal to the good pleasure of God. Divine sovereignty is not to be denied. No man has any right to God's grace; if it be given to any one, it is given by the free favour of God, as He pleases, and to whom He pleases. But do thou, as a suppliant, take this lowly ground: "Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me, for Thy mercy's sake, for Thy goodness' sake! Universal Ruler as Thou art, and able to save whom Thou wilt, for the rights of life and death are in the hands of the King of kings, be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me!" That is the way to plead with God. And then you may, if you like, use that last sentence: "Make haste, O Jehovah, to deliver me!" You may plead urgency; you may say, "Lord, if Thou dost not help me soon, I shall die. I am driven to such distress by my sin that, if thou dost not hear me soon, it will be too late. O Lord, help me now!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 16. **Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.**—*Loving God's salvation.*—All who are saved unto eternal life not only accept God's salvation from a sense of their absolute and urgent need of it as the

alone method that meets their case, but they fall in love with it, give it their best affections. Experiencing its benign, restorative influences, they delight themselves in its Divine Author—"the God of their salvation"; but they do not, cannot overlook the salvation itself. And the word of this salvation has been sent to us. One should have thought that all would have welcomed it. But the case is far otherwise. However, there are those who love God's salvation and their number continually increases. But with these it was not always so. They, too, for a long while did not desire it, and "they hid as it were their faces from it, despised it and esteemed it not." But now it is all their desire, for a great change has been wrought in them. And the reasons that rule both those who hate and those who love God's salvation are the same. This may seem a paradox, but it is sober truth. For the reason why this salvation is loved is because it engages to deliver wholly from sin, in our love of it and in our living in it. No doubt others love salvation in the sense of deliverance from sin's direful consequences hereafter. There is no need that a man should be born again in order to his loving God's salvation in this vague, outward, selfish sense. Every man is deeply averse to pain and perdition, and cannot endure the thought of them. Self-love in the form of self-defence is a universal law relating to life of every sort, even the lowest in the vegetable creation, and particularly in sentient existences, both on land and in the sea. This is so well established that it has passed into a proverb that "self-preservation is the first law of life." The sensitive plant is an instance in point. The sponge also may be adduced as another. Naturalists tell us that, in its native home in the deep, it will draw itself together of its own accord in order to escape destruction. Being often devoured by the fish for food, it quickly discovers their approach, and to protect itself against their marauding designs it contracts itself voluntarily into a much smaller space than it can be squeezed into forcibly; but the danger over, if it be fortunate enough to escape, it again expands itself into its usual size. It will not yield itself up to be devoured so long as it can help it. There is scarcely need to add that no creature will willingly suffer, especially what threatens life, without a hard struggle and a persistent resistance to the last. Hence we find mankind generally coveting earnestly to be saved in the sense of escaping from misery and enjoying bliss. At least they choose heaven rather than hell, though they will not accept it in the only way in which it may be had, and the only way in which it is worth having. They are deeply in love with forgiveness of sins and immunity from suffering their penal consequences, but they utterly regret the way in which all this may be secured. Pardon and safety they will accept, and if they can be assured that they have nothing to fear, it will be a great relief to them; but when you speak about conversion, contrition, resisting sin, and mortifying and renouncing it, and doing the will of God, they will not listen, but prefer not to be saved than to part with their sins. But those who love God's salvation love it for these very reasons, that it parts them for ever from their sins, slaying them within them, and leading them on to purity of heart and life. For salvation is not merely deliverance from danger and distress. However indispensable this experience may be to the spiritual life, it ought by degrees to be comparatively lost; at least that another greater—yes, I advisedly say greater—should supersede it and occupy its place, namely, what to do to be healed, to be spiritually well. Strange to say, here men quarrel with the salvation of God instead of allowing it to do its proper work upon them by eradicating sin from their nature. But for this selfsame reason it is ardently loved by those whose hearts are in the right. Again, what has been sought to be proved will be seen still further by adverting to the freeness of the salvation. This will further illustrate and establish the truth of my statement, for it is a well-known fact that God's salvation, by reason of its entire and absolute freeness, is at a discount on the one hand, and at a premium on the other. Next to the entire moral recovery it effects, its freeness alike stirs up hatred and produces love; and men fall out and fall in with it for the selfsame reason. Salvation by grace gives hope to the poor, needy and lost sinner, who is conscious of his great misery, unworthiness and ill-desert. How highly he prizes this graciousness! If its gratuitous freeness spoils it to blind, conceited unbelief, the selfsame peculiarity makes it doubly precious to the believer, and evokes his devoutest affection. And, blessed be God, it is a most convenient as well as a most profitable transaction for us. If we bring to this salvation our darkness, we shall have its light; our poverty, we shall have its riches; our guilt, we shall have its pardon; our misery, we shall have its happiness. (*Thomas Rees.*)

Ver. 17. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.—*God thinks upon His people*.—I. A HUMBLE CONDITION. "I am poor and needy." Now, a man may be thus—I. Spiritually—sin has brought them thus low. 2. Experimentally—for they feel it. 3. Comparatively—that is, with the treasures of grace he denies and wants, and which are for him in Christ. 4. Temporally—by reason of earthly affliction and loss. When this comes, remember your Elder Brother, Christ, who had "not where to lay His head." II. EXAMINE THE GLORIOUS ASSURANCE.—"Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." This is—1. The language of confidence, and that it is well ground is proved by the relations which God holds towards us. He calls Himself deliverer, friend, husband, Father: by His promises and by His works. See how much he has done to justify your hope. Had he a mind to kill you he would not have shown you such mercies as are yours. And how many things there are worthy of particular review in your own history. Think of them. 2. It is the language of wonder. For think of the conduct of men; the greatness of God; our unworthiness. 3. And of consolation, "Yet the Lord," etc. This is enough, and will more than counterbalance all my distresses. This is how it is the believer stands while others sink. Can we say this of ourselves? Is this your portion? How anxious are men to gain the notice of their fellow-creatures, especially if they are a little raised above themselves in condition! "Many will entreat the favour of the prince, and every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts." But in this case you are never sure you shall succeed; and you have gained nothing if you do. Whereas here the success is sure, and the success is everything. Pray, therefore, with Nehemiah, "Think upon me, O my God, for good. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live." O believer! If God thinks upon you, ought you not to think upon Him? David did. If He minds your affairs, be not you forgetful of His. Ever ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Ever cry, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (W. Jay.) *God's thoughts of us*.—I. A DESCRIPTION OF HUMAN NATURE UNDER ORDINARY CONDITIONS. 1. Some are poor and needy through ignorance. We cannot understand—(1) Ourselves. (2) Others. (3) God. His providences are an unceasing mystery. 2. Some are poor and needy through guilt. Human sinfulness is like a cheque on the bank; it may go far and remain in circulation long; but it will come eventually and be presented for immediate payment. Duke Albert of Poland, so runs the old story, bore on his armour the emblem of entire trust: just the hull of a ship, having only the main-mast and its top-piece, without any tackling or canvas whatever. But there was this motto underneath: *Deus dabit vela*: "God will furnish the sails." Thus he claimed that heavenly forces would be supplied with Divine instrumentality when need should arrive. II. THE COMFORTING ASSURANCE OF DIVINE AID. 1. God thinks about us. Simpler minds than ours are often more truly devotional: the Savoyards have the beautiful name for one of their finest mountain flowers, "*pain du bon Dieu*," the bread of the good God; for they say that by its white and delicate blossoms it reminds them of the manna, feeding Israel in the wilderness. 2. God thinks a great deal about us. His thoughts are so many, that they "cannot be reckoned up in order" (Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18). 3. God thinks about us always very kindly. Promises are just God's thoughts stored up for men. III. A LEGITIMATE GROUND FOR FULL ASSURANCE OF AID. 1. Some say that God is too far away to think of us here. Once, when a sailor had come in, saved from shipwreck, he said to those, who asked him about his days and nights out on the waters of the lonely ocean, that his greatest alarm was that God could not be made to hear up so high in the sky, beyond even the stars. Now, it is of no use to reason about this. We must just let the Lord tell us the truth in the matter; He knows, and He says that "the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him," etc. 2. Some say that God is too great to think of us here on His footstool. It might do, perhaps, in the case of a kingdom going to pieces, or a ship driving on the rocks, or a dynasty breaking; but not in our vexations and daily disquiets. This is no way to argue. God is great; indeed, He is so great that He can look placidly down upon each one of us, as we keep coming to Him, ever kindly bidding us a morning or evening welcome; no more forgetful, no more impatient, no more worried than we are when our own boys approach us with their difficulties. 3. Some say that God is too holy to think of us here. When we think of Him as residing in the shadowless purity of heaven itself, we are hardly willing to believe He cherishes any thought for rebels like men. But then we certainly know that He hates sin; that is one point gained, at all events; for if we are sinners, God cannot possibly be indifferent to

us. He cannot bear to have one speck of moral defilement anywhere within the borders of His realm. So He is gently and tenderly on the side of every man who wishes to be pure. 4. Some say that God is too happy to think of us here. He does not need us. Why should He bestir Himself or disturb Himself in any way in our behalf? Such a question shows how poorly we reason. It is true that God is happy; but something makes Him happy. His enjoyment has an intelligent basis; it has a society of companions to share it, and contribute to it. And because He desires it to continue and to increase, He is always beneficent and active, making Himself happy, everywhere sowing sunlight that He may harvest gladness from each field of the wide universe. IV. A PRAYER FOR A FAITH OF APPROPRIATION IN OURSELVES. If God really wishes to help us, and we wish to be helped, why should there be any delay on either side? 1. Why should God tarry in taking away our daily harassments? He has told us that we are to have "no thought for the morrow," because He has all the "thoughts" that belong to it in our behalf. We have only to ask Him, and then trust Him. 2. Why should God tarry in banishing our unnecessary apprehensions? What has rendered the world more unhappy than anything else has always been some great worry anticipated, which never happened after all. 3. Why should God tarry in relieving our doubts? It is said that Shakespeare once thought himself no poet, and Raphael's heart grew silent and discouraged, so that he was overheard to say he should never be a successful painter. He who has an all-powerful helper needs only to look to Him to keep His promises. 4. Why should God tarry in removing our disciplines? One day, when the young lad Goethe came from church, where he had listened to a sermon in which an attempt was made to justify the Divine goodness, his father asked him what he thought of the explanation. "Why," said this extraordinary youth, "the matter may be much simpler than the clergyman thinks; God knows very well that an immortal soul can never receive any injury from a mortal accident." Why not trust Him with our whole souls, then? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The uncommon faith.*—The two parts of the text form an antithesis of the most divergent contrast. The order in which they stand invests them with considerable attractiveness; at least the interest with which we may now take them up is not a little enhanced on this account. I. THE HUMBLE CONFESSION. 1. It is a very becoming confession. From a moral or spiritual point of view, we are, indeed, as poor as poverty itself. 2. This confession should therefore be unaffectedly veracious and sincere. Can it be either desirable or reasonable that we should do anything by way of making ourselves out to be poor and needy, except as we really are so? 3. It is only as the effect of a gracious operation of the Spirit that the confession of the text is ever candidly or cordially made. Hence it is easy to understand how this humble confession should be accompanied, as here it is, by so confident a persuasion. If the Spirit is at work within you, showing you what you really are, discovering your exigencies to the discernment of your individual consciousness, He at the same time discovers the means of supplying these exigencies, and the absolute infinitude of resource to provide the whole of that supply. II. THE CONFIDENT PERSUASION. 1. That it is a warrantable persuasion may be easily enough proved. For, if the Lord makes any poor and needy, He is certainly thinking of them, the dispensation itself shows that He is doing so. Besides, is it nothing to the shepherd of a flock that one of his sheep has wandered, though it be even the least and the weakest of a hundred in a fold, will he not leave the ninety and nine, and search after it alone? 2. It must also be very readily admitted that this persuasion is one which is fraught with unspeakable comfort and consolation. "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." It takes us back to the Divine constitution of the covenant of the rainbow (*Gen. ix. 16*). Oh, the sweetness, the perfect deliciousness, to taste of faith in this, "And I will look upon it." "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." 3. Hence, in every way this is also a most satisfying persuasion. To say, "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me," may not appear to be saying much. In a sense it may be saying very little. The utterance occurs in another psalm—"I hate vain thoughts," that is, thoughts which do not go beyond themselves, which dissipate themselves in waste, never embodying themselves in living form, in substantial action—thoughts which are inoperative, unprofitable. But the Lord's thoughts are never "vain," unproductive, empty; they are invariably sovereign, invincible, almighty. (*E. A. Thomson.*) *The greatness and frailty of human nature.*—Human life, in its frailty, exposure, brevity, could not be more aptly described than it is here—"poor and needy." And yet, if man occupies a place

in the Divine Mind, if God, who made him, thinks of and cares for him, he is great, and he may be rich and strong. I. MAN'S FEELING OF POVERTY AND NEED. Had we been less rich, we had not been so poor; less richly endowed, we had been more at ease. It is because man has reason, conscience and affections that he feels thus. The brute may groan; the man weeps. II. THE PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OF GOD. 1. There is much in the events of life which makes it hard for a man to believe in this assurance. We read of explosions, cyclones, hurricanes, and our faith staggers. One man makes a mistake in his calculations, and hundreds of brave, unoffending men sink like a stone in the depths of the sea. Where is the evidence, we are tempted to ask, of the Divine regard for individuals? But when we express the conviction that God thinks of us, we are not therefore bound to vindicate His ways, or fathom the designs of His inscrutable providence. The declaration of the text is a flashing avowal of faith in the midst of much that is mysterious. 2. I think it is harder to grasp this great truth because of the massing together of great multitudes of people in our modern towns and cities. Every person in that enormous crowd has his own little world of interests, duties, affections, associations. Is it possible, can it be, that He from His throne "beholds all these dwellers upon earth"? Truly the Lord has much to see to, and there are many beds in the wards of the world. And yet to reason so is to attach the ignorance and the limitations of the finite mind to a mind which is infinite. 3. The deeper insight which man has to-day into the vastness of the universe makes it harder for us to realize the great truth of the text. In view of the wonders of astronomy what a pigmy is man! And yet, if myriads of ages have been required in which to make this earth a suitable residence for man, it may be that God has some regard for him. True, he is a reed, but, as Pascal said, he is a thinking reed, and the God who made him to think may think of him. 4. Besides, the wonderfulness of the infinitely little is even greater than that of the infinitely great. God, who elaborates the planet, polishes the atom. If "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by their names," why may not He think of man? 5. But does God think of man? We will go at once to the highest, the all-conclusive evidence. It is in Jesus Christ that we are sure of God. He is the embodied thought of God—the Word made flesh. He cared for individuals. Look at the teaching of Jesus Christ. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "The Father Himself loveth you." Look at the Cross of Jesus Christ. If a man does that, if he yields to the love that has its eternal sign there, the last vestige of doubt will vanish, and he will cry, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." (J. Lewis.) **Contrast.**—I. A TRUE ESTIMATE. 1. Our general condition—"poor." 2. A pressing want—"needy." The one thing needful with David was the smile of Heaven. Christ in the heart is our pressing need. Distressingly poor is that life which has no God in it. II. A MARVELLOUS FACT. "The Lord thinketh upon me." 1. Grasp the greatness of the fact. To make man, to support man, to save man, and to commune with man are the collateral thoughts. 2. Grasp the directness of the fact. In moments of loneliness remember that though some are dead that were wout to have you in remembrance, and others have forgotten you, God is thinking of you now, and we know what He thinks, for we have the mind of Christ. III. A BLESSED ASSURANCE—"Thou art my help and my deliverer." 1. God is our "help" for work. 2. God is our "deliverer" from trouble. IV. AN EARNEST LONGING—"Make no tarrying, O my God." This is almost the language of impatience, at least it is the language of a burning desire. (T. Davies, D.D.) *The good man's refuge in affliction.*—I. AFFLICTIONS BEFALL GOD'S DEAREST CHILDREN. 1. If Christ had not suffered, who had been saved? If He had not been pierced through with many sorrows, not one of the sons of Adam had possessed any true comfort or sound solace. 2. And His members must be like the bush in the fire, for several reasons. (1) Are they not the Lord's garden-plots? Will He not plant and sow them with the sweetest seeds and most fragrant flowers? Shall He not then dig them up and break every little clod to pieces? (2) The faithful are likened to trees, and must not they be pruned and lopped? (3) God's children are compared to good corn, not cockle; we must expect then to be shaken with the windy and blustering storms of the wicked. The rooks of our times will be pecking out the ripest grain; and every ravening fowl fly over us and defile us; go through us and bruise us; or fall upon us and rob us; yea, our God Himself will cut us down, thresh us and grind us; for it's corn that must be put on the mill, not chaff: wheat that must be winnowed, when cockle is to be abandoned, burned.

(4) How often are the godly compared to a temple! and may not every particular person resemble a stone in divers things? We must be cut out of the rock of our natural estate; and it's no easy matter to be endured, afterwards squared and hewn, that we may be fitted to lie close and comely in the building; and this will be felt a painful polishing; yet this must be done, or we are undone. Rough stones are cast into the foundation, but they that be appointed for the pinnacles and principal places must have the more picks, the greater polishing, else they should not be of (or at the best but deface) this holy temple, this stately building.

II. THE LORD DOETH NOT SEPARATE HIS AFFECTION FROM HIS CHILDREN IN AFFLICTION. 1. The Lord is not subject to forgetfulness. He knoweth who are His; and His eye is always over them. 2. Nor is He subject to change. Whom He loveth once He loveth ever. 3. Let us examine and see what is the cause of separating affection; and shall we not find it either in the agent or object? In the lover, God, we see no cause can be found: surely, nor in the thing beloved. It is plain that no trouble destroyeth the image of God or maketh his the more prone to sin; but rather it hath been a means to move them to leave it and amend. For in trouble they will pray more fervently; pity others more compassionately; make vows, and resolve to serve God the more strictly than ever in the days of prosperity. Why, then, should the Lord withdraw His affection from them? for love leaves hold but when the object grows worse and worse. 4. This reason may also confirm the doctrine. He should be more unnatural than mere natural men (who take the most pity of their own being in the greatest distress), if He should forsake His children in their affliction. Nature itself, in these straits, will not be wanting; and shall the Author of all graces be found failing?

III. THE FAVOUR OF GOD IN AFFLICTION ONLY GIVETH THE FAITHFUL SATISFACTION. 1. The Lord is the only object of their love, and He in whom their soul principally delighteth: wherefore, enjoying Him, they have all they would. 2. Because they believe and know that all shall work together for good at their latter end. IV. THE LORD WILL DELIVER THE FAITHFUL FROM ALL DANGERS; FREE THEM IN A CONVENIENT SEASON FROM ALL AFFLICTIONS. 1. He hath so promised and purposed; and shall not His counsel stand, and His word abide for ever? 2. And this He will do for love of His children. This, then, being thus, be of good comfort for the present, fear not any future dangers; but pluck up your hearts, and gird up the loins of your minds; go on through good report and evil report; be resolute soldiers of Jesus Christ; march on valiantly, and fear not their fear. For mauger their malice, David shall serve his days; Paul finish his work, and John's life be prolonged until his task be ended. And every upright and honest heart shall have all tears wiped from his eyes, fetters from his feet, manacles from his fingers; run to and fro in the new Jerusalem that is above. (*John Barlow.*) *The gardener's care extends to all:*—"Oh!" you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth as much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me as many round about me." It is quite right that you should think little of yourself; perhaps to drop your head is part of your beauty. Many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practised the art of hanging their heads. But "supposing Him to be the gardener," then He is as much a gardener to you as He is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Mentone garden grow the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants, but on the wall to my left grow common wall flowers and saxifrages and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now, the gardener has cared for all of them, little as well as great. In fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labelled and described. The smallest saxifrage will say: "He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or the Maréchal Niel." *The Divine regard for the needy:*—When the shepherd comes in the early morning to his flock, does not his eye single out the sick, and does he need forgiveness if for a while he devotes all his skill and his care to those sheep which need it? He does not reason with himself that the largeness of the flock, and his anxious care that all should be fed renders it impossible for him to bind up that which is broken, and heal that which is diseased, but, on the contrary, his attention to all is proved by his special interest in the particular cases which most require his tenderness. Or take another parable; the watcher on the sea beach, with his telescope in his hand, paces to and fro, and keeps guard for his appointed time. He looks through the glass again and again, but a glance contents him so far as most of yonder gallant vessels are concerned, which are now in the offing; but by and by his glass remains steadily at his eye; his gaze is fixed, and in a few

moments he gives a signal to his fellows, and they haul the boat to the sea and launch her. What has there been so peculiar about this craft that it has gained the watcher's attention and stirred him to action? He saw signals of distress, or by some other token he knew the ship's need, and therefore he bestirred himself, and engaged every willing hand to lend her help. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

## PSALM XLI.

**VERS. 1-13. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.**—*The Psalmist's affliction*.—The central mass of this psalm describes the singer as suffering from two evils: sickness and treacherous friends. This situation naturally leads up to the prayer and confidence of the closing strophe (vers. 10-12). But its connection with the introductory verses (1-3) is less plain. A statement of the blessings ensured to the compassionate seems a singular introduction to the psalmist's pathetic exhibition of his sorrows. It is to be observed, however, that the two points of the psalmist's affliction are the two from which escape is assured to the compassionate, who shall not be "delivered to the desire of his enemies," and shall be supported and healed in sickness. Probably, therefore, the general promises of verses 1-3 are silently applied by the psalmist to himself; and he is comforting his own sorrow with the assurance which in his humility he casts into impersonal form. He has been merciful, and believes, though things look dark, that he will obtain mercy. There is probably also an intentional contrast with the cruel exacerbation of his sufferings by uncompassionate companions, which has rubbed salt into his wounds. He has a double consciousness in these opening verses, inasmuch as he partly thinks of himself as the compassionate man and partly as the "weak" one who is compassionated. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The right and wrong treatment of the afflicted*.—I. **THE RIGHT TREATMENT OF THE AFFLICTED.** 1. Its nature. To consider the poor, in a scriptural and true sense, is—(1) To honour their nature as men. (2) To promote their rights as citizens. (3) To alleviate their woes as sufferers. (4) To appreciate their work as servants. Poor though they be, they are children of the same great Father, and endowed with the high attribute of moral intelligence. Poor though they be, they have their rights as citizens of the same state, and they have done more to help on the world than any other class of men. They work our mines, construct our fleets, build our cities, fight our battles, write some of our best books, and invent many of the most useful and ornamental arts. 2. The happiness of the right treatment. (1) "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Such a man is blessed in the service he renders. The exercise of benevolence is the source of our chiefest joy. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (2) But the writer specifies certain advantages which are bestowed in addition to this (vers. 1-3). II. **THE WRONG TREATMENT OF THE AFFLICTED** (vers. 4-13). Under this ill-treatment—1. He had a consciousness of his own sins (ver. 4). (1) Great afflictions often awake a sense of sin. (2) Under a consciousness of his own sins he appeals for mercy. "Lord, be merciful unto me." 2. He deeply felt the wicked conduct of his enemies (vers. 5-9). (1) They desired his death. (2) They plot his ruin. 3. He directs his heart to the great God (vers. 10-13). (1) He prays. (2) He confesses. (3) He worships. It is well when all our trials and varied experiences end thus. (Homiliat.) *The blessedness of considering the case of the poor*.—There is an evident want of congeniality between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the Christian. Now, so long as this wisdom has for its object some secular advantage, I yield it an unqualified reverence. If in private life a man be wise in the management of his farm, or his fortune, or his family; or if in public life he have wisdom to steer an empire through all its difficulties, and to carry it to aggrandizement and renown—the respect which I feel for such wisdom as this is most cordial and entire, and supported by the universal acknowledgment of all whom I call to attend to it. Let me now suppose that this wisdom has changed its object—that the man whom I am representing to exemplify this

respectable attribute, instead of being wise for time, is wise for eternity—that he labours by the faith and sanctification of the Gospel for unperishable honours—what becomes of your respect for him now? Are there not some of you who are quite sensible that this respect is greatly impaired, since the wisdom of the man has taken so unaccountable a change in its object and in its direction? Men do not respect a wisdom which they do not comprehend. They may love the innocence of a decidedly religious character, but they do not much, if at all, venerate its wisdom. The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. And all that has now been said of wisdom is applicable, with almost no variation, to another attribute of the human character, and which I would call “lovely.” I mean—benevolence. But that which the world admires, and that which is truly Christian, are vastly different. The benevolence of the world—with its poetical sentiment—the Christian may not understand; that of the Christian, with its self-denial and enduring of “hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” the world does not understand. It is positively nauseated by the poetical amateur. And the contrast does not stop here. The benevolence of the Gospel is not only at antipodes with that of the visionary sons and daughters of poetry, but it even varies in some of its most distinguishing features from the experimental benevolence of real and familiar life. The fantastic benevolence of poetry is now indeed pretty well exploded; and in the more popular works of the age there is a benevolence of a far truer and more substantial kind substituted in its place—the benevolence which you meet with among men of business and observation—the benevolence which bustles and finds employment among the most public and ordinary scenes; and which seeks for objects, not where the flower blows loveliest, and the stream, with its gentle murmurs, falls sweetest on the ear; but finds them in its every-day walks, goes in quest of them through the heart of the great city, and is not afraid to meet them in its most putrid lanes and loathsome receptacles. Now, it must be acknowledged that this benevolence is of a far more respectable kind than poetic sensibility, which is of no use because it admits of no application. Yet I am not afraid to say, that, respectable as it is, it does not come up to the benevolence of the Christian; and is at variance, in some of its most capital ingredients, with the morality of the Gospel. For time, and the accommodations of time, form all its subject, and all its exercise. It labours, and often with success, to provide for its object a warm and a well-sheltered tenement; but it looks not beyond the few little years when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, when the soul shall be driven from its perishable tenement, and the only benevolence it will need will be that of those who have directed it heavenwards. The one minds earthly things, the other has its conversation in heaven. That which is the chief motive in the heart of the worldly philanthropist are but mere accessories in the heart of the Christian. All will applaud the benevolence of a Howard, but only the Christian will feel enthusiasm for the apostleship of Paul, who in the sublimer sense accomplished the liberty of the captive and brought them that sat in darkness out of the prison house. And hence it is that notwithstanding missionary zeal has ever been the pioneer for civilization, yet because the missionary labours for the eternal salvation of the heathen, the cry of fanaticism is raised against them, and they are regarded by men of the world with prejudice and disgust. Therefore we are to note the way in which the Bible enjoins us to consider the poor. Our text does not say, Commiserate the poor, for if it said only this it would leave them to the precarious provision of mere impulsive sympathy. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for consideration—Blessed is he that considereth the poor—a grave and prosaic exercise I do allow, and which makes no figure in those high-wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstasies of gratitude on the other. But the poor have souls and need to be saved, and all benevolence, however necessary and praiseworthy, that ignores this deepest need, is but partial and incomplete. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The duty of considering the poor:*—It requires wisdom to understand the constitution of things, but the more a man understands the more he will approve. The inequalities of mankind, and the consequent state and condition of the poor, is one of those subjects which most of all perplex the mind.



Such inequality is an undoubted fact, and has ever and everywhere been so. But when a good man beholds this, and sees his own affluence and the other's indigence, he will reason that the Divine intent was that he should supply his brother's need. The inequality of nature should be rectified by religion. Now, let the rich think that what they give to the poor is thrown away, or given to them who can make no return. For to the poor, under God, the rich owe all their wealth. They are the workers and producers of the wealth which the rich only consume. Is society composed only of the noble and opulent? Did you ever hear, or read, of one that was so composed? It could not subsist for a week. As the members of it would not work, they could not eat. Of what value were your estates in the country, if the poor did not cultivate them? Of what account the riches of the nobleman, or the gentleman, if they must want the comforts, the conveniences, and even the necessaries of life? "The king himself is served by the field;" and, without the labours of the husbandman, must starve in his palace, surrounded by his courtiers and guards. The world depends, for subsistence, on the plough, the sickle, and the flail! Mankind, in short, constitute one vast body, to the support of which every member contributes his share; and by all of them together, as by so many greater and lesser wheels in a machine, the business of the public is carried on, its necessities are served, and its very existence is upholden. From hence it appears that the inequality of mankind is not the effect of chance, but the ordinance of Heaven, by whose appointment, as manifested in the constitution of the universe, some must command, while others obey; some must labour, while others direct their labours; some must be rich, while others are poor. The Scripture inculcates the same important truth, and the inference to be deduced from it—"The poor shall never cease," etc. (Deut. xv. 11). Such is the method directed by Heaven of balancing the account between the different orders of men. What, then, will be the first consideration of a rich man when he sees a poor man? If he have a clear head, and a good heart, will he not reason in some such manner as this? "God has given the earth for the support of all. While I abound, why does this man want? Plainly, that we may bear one another's burdens; that my abundance may supply his need, may alleviate his distress, may help to sustain the affliction under which he groans: that I may take off his load of woe, and he take off the superfluity of my wealth; that so the stream, now broken and turbid, may again find its level, and flow pure and tranquil. If I do not act thus, may not the poor justly complain, and would not the fault be mine?" And if the rich man refuse to help the poor, it is but natural to ask whence came this inequality? It was not from the rich man's merit or the poor's demerit. It has been permitted that the poor may learn resignation, and the rich be taught charity, and the right employment of the good things vouchsafed to them. "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" let the rich remember this, and the end of their being made rich is answered. And let the rich man remember, too, that had it pleased God, he would have been poor, and it may please Him that he shall be so. He then will need that which now he is recommended to give. Such changes do occur. But whether in your case they do or not, if your riches do not leave you, yet in a little while you must leave them. Death waits to strip you of them all. They will only avail you then as you have employed them well now. In the Gospel we must seek full information as to this duty. Our blessed Lord became poor to make us rich, and has thus for ever obliged us to consider the poor. But how are we to obey these precepts? Let charity rule in the heart, and it will not need to be told how much it should give. But for rules take these:—1. Let each lay aside a due proportion of his income for charities. 2. Practise economy with a view to charity; retrench expenditure on luxury and indulgence for this end. 3. Then, in giving, give work rather than money where the poor would work if they could. Where they would not, let them be made to work. Such is true kindness to them. (*G. Horne.*) *Considering the poor:*—When God commands us, or encourages us to consider the poor and needy, He commands and encourages us to do that for our fellow-creatures which we, as poor and needy dependants on His bounty, ask Him to do for us. He was not satisfied with death and the cross only, but He took up with becoming poor also, and a stranger, and a beggar, and naked, and with being thrown into prison, and undergoing sickness, that so, at least, He might call thee off [from covetousness]. If thou wilt not requite Me (He says) as having suffered for thee, show mercy on Me for My poverty; and if thou art not minded to pity Me for My poverty, do for My disease be moved, and for My imprisonment be softened. And if even these things make

thee not charitable, for the easiness of the request comply with Me; for it is no costly gift I ask, but bread and lodging, and words of comfort. But if even after this thou still continuest unsubdued, still, for the kingdom's sake, be improved for the rewards which I have promised. Hast thou, then, no regard even for these? Yet still, for very nature's sake, be softened at seeing Me naked; and remember that nakedness wherewith I was naked on the cross for thee; or if not this, yet that wherewith I am now naked through the poor. . . . I fasted for thee; again I am hungry for thee. . . . of thee, that owest Me the requital of benefits without number, I make not request as of one that oweth, but crown thee as one that favoureth Me, and a kingdom do I give thee for these small things. . . . I delivered thee from most galling bonds; but for me it is quite enough if thou wilt but visit me when in prison. (*Chrysostom.*) They, then, who even in our poor, low way, are conformed, or beginning to be conformed, to God's mind in considering—that is, in searching out, compassionating, and relieving—distress have that in them which must be the source of blessedness, because they have that in them which is the source of happiness (I speak, of course, after the manner of men) to the Divine Mind; for God rejoices over His works. He rejoices in diffusing life and happiness; and when one province of His fair creation became marred and ruined by sin, and He extended mercy to it, then He delighted in that mercy. We then when, notwithstanding miserable deficiencies and shortcomings, we compassionate those in distress, and relieve their wants, even here enter somewhat into the very joy of God. And there is no Christian grace to the exercise of which God has in His Word so frequently or so emphatically promised a reward in the world to come. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *On Christian care for the poor:*—Judaism stood alone among ancient religions, Christianity stands alone among modern, in the inculcation of earnest, solemn, anxious consideration for the poor. And for the same reason. They both try to look on the world as the God who made it looks on it, and to share the burden of its want and its woe which is pressing on His heart. In nothing is the unity of Scripture more beautiful, more conspicuous, than in this great thought about the poor. Perhaps it is the grandest evidence of its inspiration. Christ deemed it the crowning glory of His kingdom (*Matt. xi. 5*).

**I. THE MOTIVE TO CONSIDERATION OF THE POOR.** I do not mean the reasons—they are abundant, but the motive. For the reasons and the motive power are, alas! widely different. The reasons are abundant for upright, godly conduct. A man is tempted to selfish, sensual, knavish action. There are ten thousand reasons why he should forbear, not one why he should yield. Every drop of his blood, every beat of his heart, every fibre of his nerve, could it speak, would cry out against it. His whole being, body, soul, and spirit, is against it. The whole structure of the universe is against it. God's face, God's hand, are against it. But he does it and faces it all. So here the reason is one thing; the power which makes the reason effective, which touches, moves, compels the conduct, is from a yet deeper spring. The fundamental element in the motive to care for the poor, is the revelation that the poor are the care of God. However man came to it, he has come to a god-like nature. The strongest influence which you can bring to bear on him is the revelation of the mind of God. There is something in him which moves him to imitation. The child's nature and passion, the cry of his spirit, Father, Father, tends to take shape in acts sympathetic with God.

**II. THE KIND OF CONSIDERATION DEMANDED.** 1. Set plainly before the mind's eye the terrible inequalities of gifts, possessions, culture, advantages, and all that makes the outward joy of life. We like to escape from it. The blessing is for the man who faces it; who in his comfortable home, with art, music, dress, amusement, luxurious appliances, carriages, and food, will set before his face the life of the millions to whom all this is as far off as the stars. Who will think of the laundress shut up in a hot, fetid room, standing over a tub or an ironing-board, four or five young children clinging round her, and one ill up-stairs; but who dares not stop, who must work on lest they starve. Or poor parents watching a fair child dear to them as yours to you, and pining daily for the nourishing food and sea air, but which they are utterly unable to give. The man who considers the poor will keep this in sight while he enjoys God's blessings. 2. He will not believe that God meant life to be anything like this. The heathen says that this is God's ordinance, and it is impious to interfere. But the Christian is quite sure God meant nothing like this. 3. He will say, It is a solemn part of my duty to mend it. God leaves it with us, not because He does not care, but because He cares so intensely. He will have us see to it. It is society's most pressing, most sacred,

most blessed work, to consider the poor; to be always meditating, planning, and working at what aims at the extinction of the bitterness of poverty from the world. It is not mere giving. Some do most who give nothing, who have nothing to give. It is the mind and the heart to think and to care which first need to be cultivated; the feeling that it is base and selfish to enjoy our advantages, comforts, and luxuries, while we abstain from systematic thoughtful effort to bridge over the chasm which separates the classes, and to make less bitter the lot of the poor.

III. THE BLESSING IN WHICH IT FRUITS. "He that giveth to the poor loudeth to the Lord." Many may feel that this is a far-away matter—The Lord will repay. They see nothing tangible here; brave words, no more. To me it seems the reality of realities. I see something very intangible in the best of worldly securities; who is to secure them? While this is real, solid, enduring, as the order of the world.

1. The blessing lies hid in the order of the world. God has made man and the world so that this mind shall be blessed. All men honour, love, and cherish it. It draws forth the best elements of every nature, the sunny side of every heart.

2. The blessing lies deeper and closer, in a warm glow of living joy in his own heart. It is the soul's health, this care for need. There is the glow of health in the soul of the man who cherishes it, which is incomparable with any other sensation; it is the pure joy of life. 3. Deeper still, it lies in the heart and the hand of God. God loves that man, and counts him His friend. God watches that man, and assures his life. In moments of crisis and strain it is as if a Hand came out of the invisible to clasp and upbear him—the Hand which will one day lift him out of the shades of death to that world where he shall hear the welcome, "Come, thou blessed of my Father," etc. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *Benevolence*:

—This the most prominent characteristic of our religion. I. THE DUTY OF CONSIDERING THE POOR. It must be performed on Christian principles. Not as did the Pharisees, "to be seen of men." There are several kinds of poor. Inquire, therefore, what it is to consider the poor. It implies sympathy with them; that we should, if possible, visit them; that we should relieve them; that we should seek to do good to their souls. II. THE PRIVILEGE OF CONSIDERING THE POOR.

All duty is privilege, for all God requires us to do is for our advantage. God's blessing attends the considering of the poor. "The Lord will preserve him in the day of trouble." See this in the history of Job. (*Joseph Entwistle*.) *Considering the poor*:—Poverty is a large word, and requires a large definition. Sickness, weakness, fear, sense of helplessness, sense of desolation—all these may be brought under the definition of poverty. Some men are poor mentally, needing continual suggestion, direction, and recruit of mind. Want of money is the most superficial kind of poverty. It is by no means to be neglected either by the individual or by the state, because through want of money men often perish through lack of other things. When money is taken thus typically, then pennilessness becomes a manifold disorder and weakness. The word rendered "considereth" implies a kindness of consideration. It is not only a statistical or economical view of social circumstances, it is also a direct and earnest exercise of the heart. The word may also be rendered "he that understands." We cannot understand the poor simply as an intellectual study. No man understands hunger who has not been hungry. There are dictionary interpretations of words which help us but a short way towards their true comprehension. Think of turning to the dictionary to find the meaning of poverty, hunger, sorrow, death! All the words may be neatly and clearly defined in terms, but to understand any one of them we must pass through the experience which it indicates. The blessings of the Bible are always poured upon good-doing. (*J. Parker*.) *The sick and needy (for Hospital Sunday)*:

—1. It is urged that free hospitals for the sick poor are not an unmixed good. The same may be said of every existing human institution. Were we to wait for perfection before we would give our support to any philanthropic scheme, philanthropy would die out entirely from the hearts of men from lack of worthy objects. While occasional and substantial help is a great blessing, and one which neither the receiver nor the giver can well spare without loss of pure emotion and without poverty of soul, too much help, or help too readily obtainable, is a great injury, inasmuch as it undermines manliness and self-reliance, destroys that vigour of independence which all toilers in every rank ought to cultivate, and often creates the poverty and misery it is intended to cure. The change cannot be wrought in a day or a year, or in hardly less than a score of years. It must be gradual. Many of the present generation are incurable, their inveterate pauperism cannot be shaken off. It is to the next generation that we must look for a better state of

things. The sick and needy will still be at our doors, for many a year to come; men, women and children will still be helpless and perish if we withhold our pity and relief. While poverty lasts we must keep our manhood, our brotherly sympathy, our tender compassion, and by the agency of our splendid hospitals earn the cheap honour of helping to provide for the sick and needy. 2. The second objection is that the money raised is not distributed as equitably as it should be. Still, assuming this, I ask on what reasonable, just, or humane, grounds will you withhold your help from the fund because some of it is misappropriated? Is it reasonable to cripple the healing resources of ten persons who need your help, simply because one person has received help which he did not so much need? Is it just to punish the deserving hospitals for the undeserving? 3. The third objection is that persons avail themselves of hospital relief who have no right to the benefit. Of this deplorable fact there can be no doubt. The out-patients' room at the hospital is crowded by persons who can well afford to pay for medical and surgical attendance. Is this abuse of the hospitals a valid objection to our giving them all our support? I venture to say it is not. To destroy a precious and useful thing because some one puts it to a wrong use, or because it has fallen into illegitimate hands, is a manifest folly. If the liberal subscribers to the Hospital Fund were to hand in along with their subscriptions a vigorous protest against the indiscriminate reception of applicants for relief, the abuse would soon be abated, and in time altogether disappear. But not to give is to forfeit your right to be heard; not to support the hospitals is to put yourself out of court and disqualify you from giving evidence. (*C. Voysey.*) *Practical sympathy: pity shown more by deeds than words*:—A respectable merchant of London having become embarrassed in his circumstances, and his misfortunes being one day the subject of conversation in the Royal Exchange, several persons expressed the great sympathy they felt for him; whereupon a Quaker who was present said, "I feel five hundred pounds for him, what do you feel?" *The blessedness of the benevolent*:—"Where is heaven?" asked a wealthy Christian of his minister. "I will tell you where it is," was the quick reply: "if you will go to the store, and buy £10 worth of provisions and necessaries, and take them to that poor widow on the hillside, who has three of her children sick. She is poor, and a member of the Church. Take a nurse and some one to cook the food. When you get there, read the twenty-third Psalm, and kneel by her side and pray. Then you will find out where heaven is." *A despiser of the poor reproved*:—An eminent surgeon was one day sent for by the Cardinal du Bois, Prime Minister of France, to perform a very serious operation upon him. The Cardinal, on seeing him enter the room, said to him, "You must not expect to treat me in the same rough manner that you treat the more miserable wretches at your hospital." "My lord," replied the surgeon, with great dignity, "every one of those miserable wretches, as your eminence is pleased to call them, is a Prime Minister in my eyes, for each is one of God's poor."

**Ver. 3. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.**—*Sickness*:—No one who has not felt the pains of sickness can fully appreciate the blessing of health. The lassitude and sufferings of sickness are hard to bear; and yet it is a wholesome discipline, which all of us greatly need. The design of sickness may be threefold. Sometimes it is sent to punish the wicked (1 Sam. v. 6). Or to try the patience and constancy of the righteous. Or to show forth God's glory (John ix. 3; xi. 4). I. OUR DUTY TOWARD THE SICK, WHO MAY NEED ASSISTANCE. Those who are well off in life, can have things arranged to suit themselves. The large and well-ventilated room, the comfortable bed with its clean and wholesome linen, the varied delicacies to suit the morbid appetite, the gentle and unwearied attentions of kindred and friends—all this, and more, money may readily command. But there are many who can have no such alleviation to their suffering. The kind physician comes—may God reward at the last day the many visits of mercy which he makes to the afflicted poor. But he leaves directions that the sick man should be kept quiet. Quiet indeed! He may as well command the mill dam to stop its ceaseless roar, or the hard hailstones not to rattle upon the roof. The minister of God arrives. He asks of the welfare of the sick. He prays for his recovery. His petition in such a case is nothing more nor less than asking God to work a miracle in the sufferer's behalf, because he must be left in "a condition much more likely to make a well man sick, than a sick man well." II. THINK SERIOUSLY OF THE TIME

WHEN ALL WILL BE CALLED TO LIE DOWN UPON THE BED OF LANGUISHING. There will be some morning of your lives, when business will be going on in the shops, and on the streets, but you will be far otherwise engaged. And suppose you that the bed of sickness is a convenient or suitable place to arrange your long-neglected account with God? (*A. M. Sadleir.*) *The sick man healed*.—The precise meaning of this verse is questioned, some regarding both clauses as descriptive of tender nursing, which sustains the drooping head and smooths the crumpled bedding, while others, noting that the word rendered "bed" in the second clause means properly "lying down," take that clause as descriptive of turning sickness into convalescence. The latter meaning gives it a more appropriate ending to the strophe, as it leaves the sick man healed, not tossing on a disordered bed, as the other explanation does. Jehovah does not half cure. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. I said, Lord be merciful to me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.—*An excellent prayer*.—I. HE CONFESSES THAT HE IS A SINNER. The law brings the conviction of sin, but the greatest sin of all is unbelief. II. HE COUNTS SIN THE DISEASE OF THE SOUL—"heal my soul." Sin affects the soul as disease the body. III. HE VIEWS GOD AS THE ONLY PHYSICIAN—Lord, heal my soul. We cannot heal our own soul; nor can any creatures. The sooner we see and feel this the better. But the Lord heals: "by His stripes we are healed." IV. HE IS ALSO PERSUADED THAT NOTHING BUT MERCY IN GOD WILL INDUCE HIM TO HEAL HIS SOUL. Here is the only source of our hope. (*W. Jay.*) *A singular plea in prayer*.—I. A PRAYER. 1. "Lord, be merciful unto me." (1) It may—I dare say did—mean, at least in part, "Mitigate my pains." When grieved with sore physical pain, you will find that the quiet resignation, holy patience, and childlike submissiveness which enable you just to pray, "Lord, be merciful unto me," will often bring a better relief to you than anything that the most skilled physician can prescribe. (2) He must have meant also, "Forgive my sins." It is a blessed prayer, and I charge you never to cease from using it in the sense that our Lord taught it to His disciples, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." (3) I think that David also meant, "Fulfil thy promises." "Thou hast said of the man who considers the poor, 'The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.' Lord, be merciful unto me, and deliver me in the time of my trouble. Thou hast said, 'The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive.' Lord, be merciful unto me, preserve me, and keep me alive. Thou hast said that Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies; Lord, be merciful unto me, and guard me from my foes. Thou wilt strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; Lord, be merciful unto me, and strengthen me. Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness; Lord, make my bed." 2. "Heal my soul." David does not pray, "Heal my eye; heal my foot; heal my heart; heal me, whatever my disease may be"; but he goes at once to the root of the whole matter, and prays, "Heal my soul." (1) "Heal me, Lord, of the distress of my soul." (2) "Lord, heal my soul of the effect of sin." (3) "Heal me of my tendency to sin." II. A CONFESSION. "I have sinned against Thee." 1. It is a confession without an excuse. 2. It is a confession without any qualification. He does not say, "Lord, I have sinned to a certain extent; but, still, I have partly balanced my sins by my virtues, and I hope to wipe out my faults with my tears." No; he says, "I have sinned against Thee," as if that were a full description of his whole life. 3. It is without affectation. I like a man, when he makes a confession of sin, not to be carried away into the use of proud expressions without meaning, but to speak with judgment, and to acknowledge and confess only what is true. This is the excellence of David's confession, that he owns to what no sinner will ever admit till the grace of God makes him do it: "I have sinned against Thee." III. A PLEA. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul." Why? "For I have sinned against Thee." That is a very remarkable way of pleading, but it is the only right one. 1. It is such a plea as no self-righteous man would urge. The Pharisee keeps to this strain, "Lord, be merciful unto me, for I have been obedient, I have kept thy law." O foolish, self-righteous man, do you not see that you are shutting the door in your own face? You say, in effect, "Be merciful unto me, for I do not need any mercy." 2. This is such a plea as a carnal reasoner could not urge, for he could not spy out any reason or argument in it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sin's disease*.—I. SIN IS A SOUL DISEASE. 1. Of the understanding. 2. Of the affections. 3. Of the conscience. 4. Of the will. II. GOD ALONE CAN HEAL IT. 1. We must feel our malady, and—2. Our impotence. 3. We

must recognize His power, and—4. Trust His mercy. (*W. W. Whyte.*) *The inveterateness of sin*:—Sin, we are told, is a survival; and that reverses and explodes all the traditional Christian theology. It is, they say, the effort of some past condition to assert itself when its day is over. It may be even a belated virtue which was once a true formula, under which we succeeded in securing our existence. For it has become a vice, in that it would hold us down at a lower level than that which lies open to us. It haunts us with strange and awful memories, it imprisons us with instinctive hopes which we should have forgotten and overgrown; it strikes against its own institution. It has old refuges in the blood and tissue, from out of which it refuses to be wrung. It has a dim, end-of-the-world impulse to appeal to. No wonder it is hard to beat it under. It carries on its subterranean war like the pagan deities of old, beneath the surface triumphant still. That is sin, according to this interpretation. Sin is the shadow cast out of the past; it reveals the law, out of which we have climbed to the new day. Still it sucks us down, and menaces, and defiles; but its death is sure; the future is against it; its sentence has gone out. There may be many a disloyal recrudescence of its ancient mischief; there will be strange moments when a sort of atavism will enable it to occupy lost ground; there may be even partial degradations, in which the higher will succumb to the lower. But the whole trend of life is upward, and under this sin will sink and disappear, for life is not a fall, but a rise, sin is that which is for ever being left behind. Now, of course, if this is the true account of sin, we had better wipe out the entire Bible story. Let us consider what that would mean. It would not be merely an abandonment of some obsolete dogma, nor would it be to realize all real living facts over against some blind authority. Rather it would mean the surrender of the wisest, and deepest and most prolonged accumulation of human experience in the things of the living spirit that the world has ever known. Is there any statement more completely falsified by every scrap that we know of our own inward life than the one which pronounces that sin is the merest survival? That is just the sort of illusion with which we all begin, and which all further experience explodes. We fancy at first that sin is a misfortune, an accident, a weak surrender, to some invading and hostile attack. We never lived it, we are not of that sort, we know our own rightness of intention, our innate goodness in our best self. We will face and wipe off this wrong which has besmirched us. It is so unworthy of us and so unlike us. And now we have confessed and repented and we are ourselves again. We shall be stronger when next assailed. These will die away of themselves. How futile! how ignorant! how wrong! The old, old story repeats itself; the relapse recurs with strange regularity; the moral strength just breaks at the crisis when it ought to stand. Always the thing, somehow, is too much for it; always we do again that very thing that we had sworn for ever. Why the strange persistent failure? Why this tremor at the heart? Why is the hand still put out to pluck that which we know to be forbidden? Why do the feet turn again down the paths which lead to death? Again it is the old cause—the thing that I ought to do I do not; the thing that I would not, that I do. And does this mean that we have not got at the root of the matter, that it is not the outside accident which we hope, that it is a monotonous revelation of a wrong that works by a regular law? It is I and not something that is upon me that is responsible for this disorder. Why cannot I do what I want? I, who seem to myself so inherently good, so thoroughly well-meaning, so far above these degradations, so resolute in my determination? I am somehow guilty. O miserable man that I am! O my God, it is I that have sinned against Thee and done this evil in Thy sight. Your sin will not disappear of itself. You will never grow out of it; it is too deep, too intimate, too personal for that. It will reappear within when you have expelled it from without. You are powerless. But you have the witness in yourself that sin and you can never agree. Sin is not your true life, but your death, and in the strength of that inner weakness you have force and right to appeal to; that invincible love that only waits for your appeal to find its entry. "Have mercy upon me, O God, heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." Lift that cry, and the answer is in your ears in the Person of Jesus Christ our Saviour: "I will, be thou clean." (*Canon Scott Holland.*)

Ver. 6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.—*An unsympathetic visitor*:—The picture drawn by the poet is a very common one. He has unfortunately sent for a man who does not understand his case. The man is full of words; he

can dilate upon the events of the time; he can ask many questions; he can be ostentatiously officious and meddlesome; but all is vanity, a veering wind, a mere noise in the air. The person sent for was destitute of the quality of sympathy. He did not know the ministry of silence. He did not understand that by a mere look, tender, lingering, and sympathetic, he could heal a human heart. Being a newsmonger he brought in the news of the day, which is a sure proof that he would carry the news of the day away with him. "When he goeth abroad, he telleth it:" there is nothing sacred to the mere talker; there is a disease of words, a gossip which could pry and prattle about the most mysterious and tragical experiences of the heart. The text teaches us how important it is to entrust ourselves in trying moments only to those who are rich in Christian wisdom and sympathy. Few men know how to visit the sick. Those who are in Christ Jesus ought to be able to take rich Christian sympathy to sick-chambers, and to make houses beautiful with instances of Divine revelation and promise and comfort. It should not be beneath the greatest to visit the humblest. The temptation is to over-ride the poor; to make a false use of strength in the presence of the poor; to bear down upon and discourage the poor; such persons should never be sent to minister to souls that are in distress. The piety of Christ's Church is not to be roughshod. The saints are to study the gentlest courtesy and grace of manner. They are to act "as becometh saints." (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 9. **Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.**—*The evil of Christ's friends lifting up their heel against Him:*—The psalmist doth in the text show the copestone laid on the maltreatment with which he met in the world by his particular friends turning abusive to him. They who did this were his intimates, his confidants, in whom he trusted; and his dependants, also, for they did eat of his bread. He describes their treatment under the metaphor of a horse that kicks against the man that lays meat before him. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." Now, it is evident that what the text speaks of was a typical event. Hence, consider it as it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all bread that we eat is the Lord's bread: it is He who supplies us with all the necessaries and conveniences of life. But there is a sacred and sacramental bread which we eat at the Lord's table for the nourishment of our souls. This is peculiarly His bread. I. It is a GRIEVOUS THING THAT THEY WHO EAT OF THE LORD'S COMMON BREAD SHOULD LIFT UP THEIR HEEL AGAINST HIM. 1. But they thus lift up their heel when—(1) They do not serve Him by whom they are maintained. If we live by Him we should surely live for Him. (2) When their lusts are fed and fattened by God's good benefits bestowed on them, so that instead of being led to repentance thereby, they are led farther away from God ("Jeshurun" and Ezek. xvi. 49, 50). And (3) when the good things God gives are wasted on our lusts to satisfy their cravings. (4) When in any manner of way they live to the dishonour of God (Rom. ii. 3-6). 2. Now, the causes of such evil conduct are—(1) The corruption of man's nature, which tends to make an ill use of everything. (2) Our forgetting our dependence upon God. 3. The evil of this practice. (1) It is monstrous ingratitude. Cf. Isaiah. (2) It has dismal effects, provoking God to take away His bread from men. Therefore let us be humbled on account of this sin, and resolve to reform and amend our ways. II. It is a VERY GRIEVOUS THING THAT THEY WHO EAT OF THE LORD'S SACRAMENTAL BREAD SHOULD LIFT UP THEIR HEEL AGAINST HIM. Note—1. How His professed friends may do this. (1) By unsteadiness in their walk. We are bidden "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (2) By returning to their openly profane courses (2 Pet. ii. 20-22). (3) By carnality and worldliness in the ordinary frame of their hearts. (4) By formality and listlessness in the duties of religion. (5) By secret dalliance with some bosom idol, to the slighting of Christ. (6) By neglecting opportunities of communion with God, as Sabbaths and public ordinances. (7) By the heart losing the esteem it once had for Christ. (8) By wearying of converse with God. (9) By habitual neglect of the duties of practical godliness (Gal. ii. 20). As the life of faith; the acknowledging of God in all our ways; self-examination; mourning for our own sins, and the sins of the land; commending Christ and religion to others who are strangers to Him. (T. Boston, D.D.) *The treachery of Aithophel* at once occurs to mind. No doubt many treacherous friends have wounded many trustful hearts, but the correspondence of David's history with this detail is not to be got rid of by the observation that

treachery is common. Still less is it sufficient to quote Obad. 7, where substantially the same language is employed in reference to the enemies of Edom, as supporting the national reference of the present passage. No one denies that false allies may be described by such a figure, or that nations may be personified; but is there any event in the post-exilic history which shows Israel deceived and spurned by trusted allies? The Davidic authorship and the personal reference of the psalm are separable. But if the latter is adopted, it will be hard to find any circumstances answering so fully to the details of the psalm as the Absalomic rebellion and Ahithophel's treason. Our Lord's quotation of part of ver. 9, with the significant omission of "in whom I trusted," does not imply the Messianic character of the psalm, but is an instance of an event and a saying which were not meant as prophetic, finding fuller realization in the life of the perfect type of suffering godliness than in the original sufferer. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Faithless friendship*:—Sophocles says that a faithless friend is the sorest bile that can be touched. Methinks as Jonathan laid aside his bow and arrows approaching to embrace David, so the name of friend should disarm the heart of man, that no instrument of malice should be left to give offence. It is like God's rainbow in the clouds, a sure token of reconciliation and preservation: it is the uniting of more souls in one, like the rod of Moses, and the rod of the Egyptians, which were united into one rod (Exod. vii.); that as Joseph said of Pharaoh's dreams, the dreams are two, but the interpretation is but one; so among friends the hearts are two, yet there is but one joy, one desire, and but one affection between them both. O what an accursed crime it is to cancel such a bond, much more to falsify and corrupt it! more unnatural than to divide one living child into two dead parts like the uncompassionate harlot. St. Basil did so cleave to the familiarity of holy Nazianzen, whom he called his necessary friend, that he thought not his knowledge solid, or his study profitable, or the daylight to be clear without him. Xenophon was so inflamed with the love of Proxenus, dear to him as his own soul, that he changed his bookish life, and entered into a dangerous war, as he confesseth, that he might follow him as the shadow did the body. Perfect lawgivers, says Aristotle, have had more careful regard to settle friendship in their polities, than to settle justice; for there is a recompense and satisfaction for any fault that infringeth justice, but it is past our value and exceeds all estimation how to salve up an injury which abuseth friendship: besides, there is prevention in all points of justice that an innocent may sustain no hurt, but the wounds of a false friend, how is it possible to avoid them? such an Ahithophel is like hot iron taken out of the fire which neither glows nor shines, but burns more violently than the flame that threatens. We have a test to try gold, says Euripides, a touchstone to betray deceit in counterfeit metals; but to know the mischief of a dissembler's heart, there's no mark or character to discern it. Moreover, every man hath a share in his whole friend, in all his estate and faculties, but every single man hath but his part in that commonwealth whereof he is a citizen: then reason within yourselves, can he that wrongs a friend, who is all and every whit his own, be true to that kingdom wherein he hath but a share and moiety? As the poet warned the sparrow not to build a nest in Medæa's statue, for she spared not to kill her own young ones, and could the little birds, who were but inmates, expect succour from her? So believe him not that he will be just to others, who was unjust to his other self: let him be rooted out, let him be cut off like unprofitable ivy that undermines the building upon which it creeps. (*Bishop Hacket.*)

Vers. 11-13. **By this I know that Thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.**—*Present favour and boundless hope*:—The last words of the psalm are sunny with the assurance of present favour and with boundless hope. The man is still lying on his sick-bed, ringed by whispering foes. There is no change without, but this change has passed: that he has tightened his hold of God, and therefore can feel that his enemies' whispers will never rise or swell into a shout of victory over him. He can speak of the future deliverance as if present; and he can look ahead over an indefinite stretch of sunlit country, scarcely knowing whether the furthest point is earth or no. His integrity is not sinless, nor does he plead it as a reason for Jehovah's upholding, but hopes for it as the consequence of His sustaining hand. He knows that he will have close approach to Jehovah; and though, no doubt, "for ever" on his lips meant less than it does on ours, his assurance of continuous communion with God reached, if not to actual, clear consciousness of immortality, at all events to assurance of a future so inde-



finitely extended, and so brightened by the sunlight of God's face, that it wanted but little additional extension or brightening to be the full assurance of life immortal. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

## PSALM XLII.

**VERS. 1-11.** As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.—*The Korachite psalms*.—The second book of the Psalter, characterized by the use of the Divine name "Elohim" instead of "Jehovah," begins with a cluster of seven psalms (reckoning Ps. xlii. and xliii. as one), of which the superscription is most probably regarded as ascribing their authorship to "the sons of Korach." These were Levites, and (1 Chron. ix. 19, etc.) the office of keepers of the door of the sanctuary had been hereditary in their family from the time of Moses. Some of them were among the faithful adherents of David at Ziklag (1 Chron. xii. 6), and in the new model of worship inaugurated by him the Korachites were doorkeepers and musicians. They retained the former office in the second Temple (Neh. xi. 19). The ascription of authorship to a group is remarkable, and has led to the suggestion that the superscription does not specify the authors, but the persons for whose use the psalms in question were composed. The Hebrew would bear either meaning; but if the latter is adopted, all these psalms are anonymous. The same construction is found in Book I. in Ps. xxv.—xxviii., xxxv., xxxvii., where it is obviously the designation of authorship, and it is naturally taken to have the same force in these Korachite psalms. It has been conjectured by Delitzsch that the Korachite Psalms originally formed a separate collection entitled "Songs of the Sons of Korach," and that this title afterwards passed over into the superscriptions when they were incorporated in the Psalter. The supposition is unnecessary. It was not literary fame which psalmists hungered for. The actual author, as one of a band of kinsmen who worked and sang together, would, not unnaturally, be content to sink his individuality and let his songs go forth as that of the band. Clearly the superscriptions rested upon some tradition or knowledge, else defective information would not have been acknowledged as it is in this one; but some name would have been coined to fill the gap. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Over the aqueducts of water*.—The Hebrew term is *apheek*; and in the original the clause reads, *al apheekaiymayim*, which may be translated, "over the aqueducts of water." "Aqueducts are, and always must have been, very common in Palestine, not only for bringing water to waterless towns, but also for the purpose of irrigating gardens. Ruined remains of these structures are to be found everywhere throughout the country. It seems certain that there must have been a familiar technical term for them in Hebrew, and that the writers of the Bible, who draw their imagery so largely from the features of garden culture, must have referred to these precious water-channels. One word in Hebrew, the sense of which seems to have been entirely overlooked, must plainly have borne this meaning, the word "apheek," which occurs eighteen times in the Old Testament, and also in some names of places, as Aphaik, near Beth-horon. The translators of our Authorized Version have been able to make but little of it, rendering it by seven different words, most frequently by "river," which it cannot possibly mean. The word comes from "Aphak," "restrained," or "forced," and this is the main idea of an aqueduct, which is a structure formed for the purpose of constraining or forcing a stream of water to flow in a desired direction. So strongly were the Palestine aqueducts made, that their ruins, probably in some places two thousand years old, remain to this day. In rare instances (there is one at Jerusalem) they are fashioned of bored stones. Sometimes for a short distance they are cut as open grooves in the hard limestone of the hills, or as small channels bored through their sides. When the level required it, they are built up stone structures above ground. But the aqueducts of Palestine mostly consist of earthenware pipes, laid on or underground in a casing of strong cement. "Apheek," I contend, in its technical sense stands for an ordinary covered Palestine aqueduct, but it is also poetically applied to the natural underground

channels, which supply springs and to the gorge-like, rocky beds of some mountain streams which appear like huge, open aqueducts. . . . The psalmist thirsts for God, and longs to taste again the joy of His house, like the parched and weary hind who comes to a covered channel conveying the living waters of some far-off spring across the intervening desert. She scents the precious current in its bed of adamantine comont, or hears its rippling flow close beneath her feet, or, perchance, sees it deep down through one of the narrow air holes; and as she agonises for the inaccessible draught, she "pants over the aqueducts of water." (*James Neil, M.A.*) *The soul compared to a hind*:—The "soul" is feminine in Hebrew, and is here compared to the female deer, for "pants" is the feminine form of the verb, though its noun is masculine. It is better, therefore, to translate "hind" than "hart." The "soul" is the seat of emotions and desires. It "pants" and "thirsts," is "cast down" and disquieted; it is "poured out"; it can be bidden to "hope." Thus tremulous, timid, mobile, it is beautifully compared to a hind. The true object of its longings is always God, however little it knows for what it is thirsting. But they are happy in their very yearnings who are conscious of the true direction of these, and can say that it is God for whom they are athirst. The correspondence between man's needs and their true object is involved in that name "the living God"; for a heart can rest only in one all-sufficient Person, and must have a heart to throb against. But no finite being can still them; and after all sweetnesses of human loves and helps of human strengths, the soul's thirst remains unslaked, and the Person who is enough must be the living God. The difference between the devout and the worldly man is just that the one can only say, "My soul pants and thirsts," and the other can add "after Thee, O God." (*A. Mac-laren, D.D.*) *The religious aspects of a soul in earnest*:—I. INTENSELY THIRSTING AFTER GOD. This craving for "the living God"—1. Renders all logical arguments for a Supreme Being unnecessary. 2. Indicates the only method for elevating the race. II. GREATLY DISTRESSED ON ACCOUNT OF THE WICKED. 1. Taunted on account of his religion. 2. Deprived of the public privileges of his religion. III. ANXIOUSLY EXPOSTULATING WITH SELF ON ACCOUNT OF DESPONDENCY. 1. He inquired into the reason. 2. He resolved upon the remedy. (*Homilist.*) *Religious depression*:—I. THE CAUSES OF DAVID'S DESPONDENCY. 1. The thirst for God. 2. The temporary loss of the sense of God's personality. Let us search our own experience. What we want is, we shall find, not infinitude, but a boundless One; not to feel that love is the law of this universe, but to feel One whose name is Love. For else, if in this world of order there be no One in whose bosom that order is centred, and of whose Being it is the expression: in this world of manifold contrivance, no Personal Affection which gave to the skies their trembling tenderness, and to the snow its purity: then order, affection, contrivance, wisdom, are only horrible abstractions, and we are in the dreary universe alone. Foremost in the declaration of this truth was the Jewish religion. It proclaimed—not "Let us meditate on the Adorable light, it shall guide our intellects"—which is the most sacred verse of the Hindoo sacred books: but "Thus saith the Lord, I am, that I am." In that word "I am," is declared Personality; and it contains, too, in the expression, "Thus saith," the real idea of a revelation, viz., the voluntary approach of the Creator to the creature. Accordingly, these Jewish psalms are remarkable for that personal tenderness towards God—those outbursts of passionate individual attachment which are in every page. How different this from the God of the theologian—a God that was, but scarcely is: and from the God of the philosopher—a mere abstraction, a law into which all other laws are resolved. Quite differently speaks the Bible of God. Not as a Law: but as the Life of all that is—the Being who feels and is felt—is loved and loves again—counts the hairs of my head: feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies: hears my prayers, and interprets them through a Spirit which has affinity with my spirit. It is a dark moment when the sense of that personality is lost: more terrible than the doubt of immortality. For of the two—eternity without a personal God, or God for seventy years without immortality—no one after David's heart would hesitate, "Give me God for life, to know and be known by Him." No thought is more hideous than that of an eternity without Him. "My soul is athirst for God." The desire for immortality is second to the desire for God. 3. The taunts of scoffers. "Where is now thy God?" (ver. 8). This is ever the way in religious perplexity: the unsympathizing world taunts or misunderstands. In spiritual grief they ask, why is he not like others? In bereavement they call your deep sorrow unbelief. In misfortune they comfort you, like Job's friends, by calling it a visitation. Or like the barbarians at Melita,

when the viper fastened on Paul's hand: no doubt they call you an infidel, though your soul be crying after God. Specially in that dark and awful hour, when He called on God, "Eloi, Eloi:" they said, "Let be: let us see whether Elias will come to save Him." II. DAVID'S CONSOLATION. 1. And first, in hope (ver. 5): distinguish between the feelings of faith that God is present, and the hope of faith that He will be so. There are hours in which physical derangement darkens the windows of the soul; days in which shattered nerves make life simply endurance; months and years in which intellectual difficulties, pressing for solution, shut out God. Then faith must be replaced by hope. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Clouds and darkness are round about Him: but righteousness and truth are the habitation of His throne. 2. This hope was in God. The mistake we make is to look for a source of comfort in ourselves: self-contemplation instead of gazing upon God. In other words, we look for comfort precisely where comfort never can be. For first, it is impossible to derive consolation from our own feelings, because of their mutability. Nor can we gain comfort from our own acts, because in a low state we cannot justly judge them. And we lose time in remorse. In God alone is our hope. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) *Living thirst*:—This language is that of the true Christian believer. The strength that he feels is not the strength of a transient passion of the heart, but the thirst of an enlightened, sanctified, and believing soul. The object of that thirst is God. Its object indicates its origin; for a thirst that stretches upwards to God originates with the inspiration of God, and, like true religion, must have had its origin in God. This thirst is caused by admiration of God; by love of God; by desire after His holiness and His presence, and His promised restoration of all things. But how does the Christian reach the element that will satisfy this thirst of his soul? 1. First, by thinking upon Him. A Christian in solitude and in silence can think of God. The literary man can think of literature, and hold communion with the spirits of departed "literati" through the medium of the writings they have left behind them. The statesman can think of great political questions, and his mind can be absorbed with them. Now, communion with God, thinking of Him, what He is, what He has done, what He has promised to do, what He will give, and what He has given, is really letting the water pot descend into that better than Jacob's well, to bring from its cool depths that which will satisfy our thirst for God, for the living God. 2. A Christian will try to satisfy his thirst for God by reading His holy Word. What is the Bible? Just a description of what God is. It is poetry, and oratory, and history, and all the resources of human thought, of human genius, inspired by the Spirit of God, designed to stimulate your thirst for Him, and to bring you into closer contact with the inexhaustible Fountain out of which you may drink freely. 3. In the next place, you gratify this thirst, and you deepen it also while you do so, in the exercises of public prayer and praise, and public worship. 4. And we gratify this thirst, as well as excite it, by appearing from time to time at the table of our blessed Lord. (J. Cumming, D.D.) *Thirsting for God*:—I. THE CAUSES OF THIS SPIRITUAL THIRST. 1. Admiration of the Divine attributes. 2. Love for the Divine Being. 3. A lively sense of Divine goodness in the dispensation of both temporal and spiritual benefits. 4. A deep sense of his wants as a sinner. 5. A conviction of the inadequacy of his inward sources of happiness, and of the unsatisfying nature of all sublunary enjoyments. 6. The afflictions which he is called to endure. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE CHRISTIAN SEEKS TO GRATIFY THIS SPIRITUAL THIRST. 1. The studious reading of God's Word. 2. The exercise of devout and holy contemplation. 3. Prayer and praise. 4. Avoidance of sin. 4. Eye fixed on heaven. (G. Thacker.) *Panting after God*:—Genuine piety is the tendency of the soul towards God; the aspiration of the immortal spirit after the great Father of spirits, in a desire to know Him and to be like Him. I. HOW IS A DESIRE TO KNOW GOD AND TO BE LIKE HIM IMPLANTED AND CHERISHED IN THE HEART OF MAN? All true piety, all genuine devotion in fallen man, has a near and intimate connection with the Lord Jesus, and is dependent on Him. It is by His mediation that the devout soul aspires towards the blessed God; it thirsts for fuller and clearer discoveries of His glories, as they shine with a mild effulgence in the person of His incarnate Son; it longs to attain that conformity to Him of which it sees in Jesus Christ the perfect model. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS PANTING OF THE SOUL AFTER GOD, THIS VITAL PRINCIPLE OF ALL GENUINE PIETY. 1. It is a most ennobling principle; it elevates and purifies the soul, and produces in the character all that is lovely and of good report. 2. It is a most active principle. From a

world groaning under the ruins of the apostasy, where darkness, and pollution, and misery prevail, and death reigns, the child of God looks up to that glorious Being whose essence pervades the universe, and whose perfections and blessedness are immense, unchanging, and eternal, and he longs to know and resemble Him. 3. It is a permanent and unfailing principle. Each changing scene of his earthly pilgrimage affords the devout man opportunity of growing in the knowledge and the likeness of God, and the touch of death at which his material frame returns to its native dust, does but release his spirit from every clog, that she may rise unencumbered to see Him as He is and know even as she is known. (*Bishop Armstrong.*) *The panting hart*:—In this state of mind there is something sad. But something commendable also. For the next best thing to having close communion with God is to be wretched until we find Him. I. **THE OBJECT OF THE DESIRE** which is here described. It was for God. Probably this psalm belongs to the time of the revolt of Absalom. But David's desire is not for lost royalties, wealth, palaces, children: no, nor the temple, nor his country, but God. He longed to appear again before God, so that—1. He might unite in the worship of the people. 2. Gain restored confidence as to his interest in the love of God, and to have it shed abroad in his heart. May such desires be ours. II. **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS DESIRE.** 1. Directness. The hart panteth, there can be no doubt what for. So with David, he goes straight to the point. He knew what he needed. 2. Unity. As the hart longs for nothing but the water brooks, so David for God only. Have you ever seen a little child that has lost its way crying in the streets for "mother"? Now, you shall give that child what you will, but it will not stay crying for "mother." I know it is thus with all the family of God in regard to an absent God. 3. The intensity of this desire. How awful is thirst. In a long and weary march soldiers have been able to endure much want of solid food, but—as in the marches of Alexander—they have died by hundreds from thirst. 4. Its vitality. Thirst is connected with the very springs of life. Men must drink or die. 5. And it is an expressive desire. The Scotch version reads—"Like as the hart for water brooks, In thirst doth pant and bray." And in the margin of our Bibles it reads, "As the hart brayeth," etc. The hart, usually so silent, now begins to bray in its agony. So the believer hath a desire which forceth itself into expression. It may be inarticulate, "groanings which cannot be uttered," but they are all the more sincere and deep. In all ways will he express before God his great desire. III. **ITS EXCITING CAUSES.** 1. Something inward, the secret life within. A camel does not pant after water brooks, because it carries its own supplies of water within it; but the hart does because it has no such resources. 2. But also something outward. The hart because of the heat, the distance, the dogs. So the believer. The source of David's longings lay partly in the past. We remember delightful seasons gone by. Also from the present. He was at that moment in eminent distress. And the future. "Hope thou in God," saith he, "for I shall yet praise Him." IV. **COMFORTABLE ENCOURAGEMENTS.** There is no thirst like the thirst of the man who has once known what the sweetness of the wine of heaven is. A poor king must be poor indeed. Yet out of our strong desires after God there come these comforts. 1. The thought—whence come they? This desire is a gift from God. 2. If He has given it me, will He not fulfil it? 3. And if I have wandered from my God, He is willing to forgive. Let us return to Him, then, and let us recollect that when we return we shall soon be uplifted into the light. It does not take long for the Lord to make summer-time in the wintry heart. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Thirsting for God*:—I. **THE OBJECT OF THE PSALMIST'S DESIRE**—God. By which he means—1. A sense of God's favour. 2. A sight of God's glory, so that he might not merely know that God was glorious, but that he might feel it. 3. The enjoyment of God's presence. Hence it was that he longed after God's house, for it was there that so often God had met him and had satisfied this thirst of his soul. II. **THE STRENGTH OF HIS DESIRE.** "My soul panteth, yea," etc. This was his soul's deep yearning. Hence we learn—1. That a soul really desiring God can be satisfied with nothing else. Nor—2. With but a little of Him. It is not a drop or a taste of the water brook that quiets the panting deer. He plunges into it and drinks eagerly of it. And so with our souls. The more these blessed waters are drunk the more they are relished and desired. 3. The cause which made David thus earnestly desire God. It was his affliction, and his inward distress and darkness. And this is God's gracious purpose in letting such things come upon us. Do not be dismayed if you can only say, "I wish I did thus thirst." We are saved not for our thirst, but for Christ's sake.

(C. Bradley, M.A.) *The longing for God*.—I. WHAT THIS LONGING OF DAVID WAS. It was not, observe, his lost crown that he most longed for; nor the broken peace of his kingdom; nor even Absalom his son; he had deeper longings than these; he had a deeper need than they could supply. What he did long for was God Himself; for God, he knew, was the strength of his heart, and the only portion which could satisfy him for ever. II. THIS LONGING IS COMMON TO GOD'S SAINTS (2 Cor. v. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Titus ii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12; Rev. xxii. 20). A great part of our nature is made for feeling; a great portion of our life is made up of it; every moment is full of love, and hope, and desire, and fear; and Christ who claims the whole man will not pass over these levers of action, these moving powers of the whole man, as of no importance. Let us give them their proper place; and if David, and Paul, and Peter, and John, mark out a longing after God as the healthy state of the soul, let us not be satisfied if we are strangers to such a longing. III. HOW THE PRESENCE OF THIS LONGING IS AN EARNEST OF COMPLETE BLESSEDNESS. God's Holy Spirit is Himself the water brook for man's consolation; and He comes, as the Nile when it overflows its banks, and wherever there is a channel, or an aperture, or even a crack in the dry and thirsty soil, there He pours in the life-giving streams of comfort and of love, as one who knows not how to give and to bless enough. Your mourning heart is opened by its very grief, and He is come to bless it. Doubt Him not. Doubt not but that the same Spirit will restore you to peace and joy; will fill you with the assurance of fresh hope; will strengthen you to bear meekly the yoke which He shall lay upon you; will make you to overflow with love, and give you even upon earth a foretaste of heaven. (Canon Morae.) *Desire after God*.—I. DIVINE IN ITS SOURCE. Desires are the pulses of the soul. We are that in the sight of God which we habitually desire and aim to be. Archbishop Leighton said, "I should utterly despair of my own religion, were it not for that text, 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness.'" II. INTENSE IN ITS DEGREE. Thirst is the strongest feeling we know. It is the established order of nature, and an original law in the constitution of the mind, that love should create love; and if this obtain in the measures and intercourse of human kindness, much more might we expect it to prevail in the sacred converse which is held between earth and heaven—"spirits are not thus finely touched, but to fine issues." III. PRACTICAL IN ITS TENDENCY, AND ENNOBLING IN ITS INFLUENCE. A pure affection towards an earthly object exalts the soul in which it dwells, by associating another's happiness with our own; according to Wordsworth's fine line—"Love betters that is best," by strengthening those fine ties which ally us to the side of virtue. How much more must this be the case with our religious emotions, where the object is infinite and the benefactor is Divine. IV. PROPHECIC OF ITS OWN FULFILMENT. *Panting after God*.—I. THE BELIEVING PANT AFTER THE FAVOUR OF GOD. The most luxurious pasture, or the securest shade and retreat of the forest has no attraction for the hart panting in the agony of thirst for the water brook; and what were honour, power, or wealth to trembling sinners, if that which alone can meet their necessities be withheld? II. THE BELIEVING PANT AFTER RESEMBLANCE TO GOD. This is a part of salvation as well as the former, and the two are inseparably connected. No man has the favour of God that does not aspire to be like Him, and no man who is like God is without His favour and complacential regard. III. THE BELIEVING PANT AFTER SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE AND COMMUNION WITH GOD. IV. THE BELIEVING PANT AFTER THE PRESENCE AND ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HEAVEN. This is the final and glorious issue to which their hopes and desires are habitually directed; all that they pant after in God on earth shall in that better country be possessed fully and for ever. (J. Kirkwood.) *The soul's thirst for God*.—Such psalms as this and the sixty-third are as important items in the history of man as the hieroglyphics of Egypt, or the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria, or the stone implements of prehistoric times: if you are to have a complete system of anthropology, to investigate and know what man really is, it is manifest that you must take account of the aspirations of his soul, as well as of the power of his intellect or the skill of his hands. Conceive an investigation as to the nature of man being made by some one quite fresh to the subject—say an inhabitant of Jupiter or Saturn: conceive such an investigator to have examined our ships and our steam engines and our agriculture, our books of science, our treatises on law and medicine and what not: and suppose that when all this was done, and our distant visitor was forming his opinion about man, he suddenly stumbled upon a book containing such words as these, "My soul is athirst for God," etc.; suppose this, and what would be the

result? "Certainly this at least," our investigator would say, "this is quite a new view of man: 'thirst for the living God'? that is something very different in kind from agriculture and commerce and steam engines and law and medicine—all those things might exist, and be the things upon which the mind of man fully occupied itself—but a soul thirsting for the living God—that is something totally different in kind from what I had hitherto imagined man to be: I must begin my examination of man all over again." And surely, if we consider the manner in which the different parts of this wonderful universe fit one into another, and exhibit consistency and order and unity, the thirst of the human soul for God is a good argument that there is a God to be thirsted for. When the hart seeks the water brooks, it is no speculative voyage of discovery upon which the poor creature goes. The living creature and the water are close akin to each other: if you analyze the animal's substance you will find that water constitutes a large proportion of it: and though this does not prove that every hart that is thirsty will at once be fortunate enough to find a water brook, it is a good proof that water is what the animal must find if it is not to die, and it gives a strong reason to believe that the water brooks will somehow be found. And this gives us a rough suggestion of the argument for the Being of God, arising from the thirst for God which the human soul is undoubtedly capable of feeling: men would not thirst for that with which their own nature has no affinity: it is the unseen presence of the Spirit of God—that Spirit which was breathed into man when he became a living soul—it is this presence which makes him thirst for God Himself, and which assures him that there is a God without whom he cannot live, "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore." One might have fancied or even hoped that the truth of God's being, which was evidently the support of human souls three thousand years ago, would not have been questioned now, but as there were persons in those days who were ready at once to turn upon a believer in trouble and ask him scornfully, Where is thy God now? and as there were others who were prepared to assert dogmatically, There is no God, so it has been true ever since that the being of God has been liable to be denied. Of course that which you cannot see it is always easy to deny. Who can contradict you? Is not one man's No as good as another man's Aye? (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) *Man's craving for God:*—Both these psalms are by "the Sons of Korach," a family of Levites whose inheritance lay on the eastern side of Jordan. They were appointed doorkeepers of the Tabernacle. They possessed the Hebrew faculty for music in a high degree; and some of them possessed the closely allied faculty of poetical conception and utterance, and became "singers" in both senses of that word, composing the psalms which they afterwards set to music and chanted in the Temple. Dwelling on the other side of Jordan, it was often impossible for them to reach Jerusalem. Many of the Korachite psalms were composed when they were thus kept from their loved work. They abound in expressions of intense passionate desire to appear before the Lord. If we ask, Why this intense craving for the Temple and its services, the sons of Korach reply: "It is because we want Him, the Living God." Do these words express one of the primitive intuitions, one of the profoundest yearnings and desires of every human heart, a yearning which no words can adequately utter, much more over-state? Is this the secret of the restlessness which underlies all our rest—that we want God, and cannot be at peace until He lift up upon us the light of His countenance? We are denizens of two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, and these two, opposed as they may seem, are really one, since the natural world is but the "body," the complex phenomenon and organ of the spiritual. So manifold are the ways in which the sense of a Divine Presence is quickened within us, and our need of that Presence, that it is hard to select those which are most suggestive and impressive. . . . Only as we trust, love and reverence God, can the cry of our heart be stilled, and the infinite hunger of the soul be satisfied. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *Religious affections attended with increase of spiritual longing:*—The higher the gracious affections are raised, observes Edwards, the more is a spiritual appetite after spiritual attainments increased; but the false affections rest satisfied in themselves. I. MARKS OF THE TRUE AFFECTION. 1. The more a true Christian loves God, the more he desires to love Him. 2. The greatest eminency has no tendency to satiety. 3. Spiritual enjoyments are soul-satisfying. II. MARKS OF THE FALSE AFFECTIONS. 1. As the false affections arise, the desire for more grace is abated. 2. As soon as the soul is convinced that its title to heaven is sure, all its desires are satisfied. III. IF HYPOCRITES PROFESS

TO HAVE THE TRUE AFFECTIONS, ALL THEIR DESIRES ARE FOR BY-ENDS. 1. They long after clearer discoveries, but it is that they may be the better satisfied with themselves. 2. Or their longings are forced, because they think they must have them.

IV. GOOD SIGNS OF GRACE. 1. A longing after a more holy heart. 2. A longing after a more holy life. (*Lewis O. Thompson.*) *Thirsting for God*.—I. MAN NEEDS GOD. 1. Think how helpless we are in the presence of all the mysteries of life without God. 2. Think of the far greater mysteries of a moral and spiritual kind by which we are surrounded; how the wicked appear to triumph over the righteous, how the kingdom of darkness seems likely to gain the victory over the kingdom of light; and then ask what rest we can find, unless we believe and know that God ruleth over all, and that He will yet bring all things into subjection unto Him. 3. Think of the awful power of sin, how it enslaves the soul and oppresses the heart and troubles the conscience; how it spreads like fire and like pestilence, carrying death and desolation wherever it goes; and then ask how we are to be delivered from this terrible destroyer, except by the power of the living God. 4. Think how we need God in all the temptations and trials, the perplexities and cares, the business and toil and responsibility. II. GOD GIVES HIMSELF TO MAN. Just as He gives light and beauty for the eye, sound and music for the ear, bread for the hunger and water for the thirst of the body, so He gives Himself, for the satisfaction of the soul. It remains for us to abide in fellowship with Him, to walk all the day in the light of His countenance, and to make our life on earth a pledge and earnest of the nobler and diviner life of heaven. (*G. Hunaworth, M.A.*) *God*.—I. AS A PERSONALITY. 1. That He is as distinct from the universe as the architect from the building, the author from his book, admits of no rational doubt. 2. We believe in His personality (1) Because we have it. Could He give what He has not? (2) Because we instinctively believe it, and (3) Because the Bible declares it. II. AS A LIVING PERSONALITY. "The living God." The world abounds with dead gods, but the God is living, consciously, independently, actively, ubiquitously. The God of modern Christendom is rather the God that was living in Old Testament times, and in the days of Christ, than the God that is living here, and with every man. III. AS A LIVING PERSONALITY CRAVED AFTER BY THE HUMAN SOUL. "My soul thirsteth for the living God." 1. The soul is constitutionally theistic. It believes in God. 2. The soul is immensely great. Nothing but God can satisfy it. It will not be satisfied with His works, however vast and lovely, it must have Him Himself. (*Homilist.*) *Thirsting for God*.—As the hunted hart; as the hart flying from the enemy, more dead than living; as the overrun, overborne, imperilled hart pants and cries for the water brooks, so . . . then we fill in our human experience; for if we are living any life at all we are hunted, persecuted, threatened. Until we are sensible of being hunted we cannot pray much. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so . . ." The "so" is balanced by the "as." These words of manner must be equal the one to the other; the hart will be ashamed of them if it should ever come to know that so quiet, tame speech addressed to heaven is supposed to represent its earnestness when it is hunted by furious hounds. "As the hart . . ." Then this soul-panting after God is natural. Whatever is natural admits of legitimate satisfaction; whatever is acquired grows by what it feeds on until it works out the ruin of its devotee. No hart ever panted after wine; no bird in the air ever fluttered because of a desire to be intoxicated. When we lose or leave the line of nature we become weak, infatuated, lost. Tertullian says the natural response of the human heart is Christian. "So panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Yea, for nothing less. Man needs all God. Every sinner needs the whole Cross. Every flower needs the whole solar system. Herein is the mystery of Divine passion and love, that we can all have a whole—a mystery, mayhap a contradiction in words, but a sweet reality in experience. "For Thee, O God." Then for nothing strange. As the water brooks were made for the chased or panting hart, so God lives to satisfy the soul of man. Herein see the greatness of the soul of man. What does that soul need to fill it and satisfy it, and quiet it, and give it all its possible consciousness of glory? It needs the living God. Atheists themselves are intermittently religious. Even God-deniers are in some degree in an unconscious sense God-seekers. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The feelings and sentiments of a renewed soul*.—I. FROM WHENCE DOES THIS VEHEMENT BREATHING AFTER GOD ARISE? It evidently arises from a deep sense of our own insufficiency, and the insufficiency of any creature, however accomplished or perfect, to render the soul happy. The soul, brought to feel its own indigence, is encouraged to look forward with hope, and made to thirst after God, the living God.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS THIRSTING FOR GOD? 1. An experimental feeling of the love of God. 2. Delight in every means, in every duty, in every ordinance of Divine appointment, where He hath promised to meet with His humble worshippers, and to bless them. 3. A heart disposed to wrestle with every difficulty that obstructs our access to God, and stands in the way of the full enjoyment of Him, as reconciled to us, and at peace with us. 4. This thirsting for God never fails to be accompanied with longing desires to be with the Lord, and to behold His glory. Sooner may iron cease to be attracted by the lodestone, or the sparks cease to fly upwards, or the rivers to roll towards the ocean, than a soul thirsting for God should sit down satisfied with any attainments at which it can arrive in this mixed and imperfect state. (*T. Gordon.*) *The soul of man has no resource independent of God*:—A camel does not pant after water brooks, because it carries its own water within it; but the hart does, because it has no inward resources. After being hunted on a hot day, it has no inward supplies; it is drained of its moisture. So are we. We do not carry a store of grace within of our own upon which we can rely; we need to come again, and again, and again, to the Divine fountain, and drink again from the eternal spring. Hence it is because we have a new life, and that life is dependent upon God, and has all its fresh springs in Him, that therefore we pant and thirst after Him. O Christian, if you had a sacred life which could be maintained by its own energies within, you might do without your God, but since you are naked, and poor, and miserable, apart from Him, you must come and drink day by day of the living springs, or else you faint and die. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 2. **My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?**—*Thirst satisfied*:—Let us, that we may realize this thirst of the soul, dwell upon the contrast. There are at least four forms of attraction presented to the soul. I. **THAT OF NATURAL BEAUTY**. You find a delight as you gaze upon nature. But you are not satisfied. II. Nor are you, either, with all the forms of **MEN'S CEASELESS ACTIVITY**, in which art, genius, or political achievement have expressed themselves—none of these things will ever, can ever, satisfy the soul. III. **PURE INTELLECT**, also, notwithstanding the power of delight there is in it, has its limits in this respect. It does not satisfy. Then there is—IV. **THE REGION OF THE AFFECTIONS**, where suns are always glorious, and sunsets only speak of brighter dawn. We have all known it in friend, sweetheart, wife, child, which have called forth the dear expressions of that strong heart that beats in Englishmen. But these dear ones pass away, and we find, as life goes on, that after all in the world of the affections, that old, strange law that pervades one branch of the contrast prevails: affection can stimulate, it can support, it can console, it can delight, it can lead to delirium at moments, but it does not satisfy. And because we are born for eternity, not for a moment, therefore, never, only by the satisfaction of the moral instincts, can this thirst be assuaged. The Ten Commandments, and especially the Gospel, are for this end. Accept a personal Christ, God in Christ, and so may you quench your otherwise unquenchable thirst. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *God the object of religion*:—There is scarcely in the Psalter a more touching psalm than this. The writer is probably an exile of the early Assyrian period. He thinks of the blessed past when he worshipped in the Temple, and had his share in "the voice of joy and praise." But now the cruel heathen taunt him with the insulting question, "Where is thy God?" Hence, he yearns for the presence of God. He is like the thirsty stag panting after the distant water brooks; his inmost being is "athirst for God; yea, even for the living God." What a strange phrase, the living God. It points to deities who are not alive. The Hebrews thus distinguish the true God from the false gods of the heathen (Ps. xcvi. 5). Heathenism, according to Scripture, is a lie, and the psalmist's soul thirsted for the living God. And still the soul of man is restless for God. Again and again the human heart has protested against all endeavours to crush the noblest of its aspirations. It wants not pleasures which may degrade, nor philosophies which may disappoint, but "the living God." And now let us see how this thirst has been dealt with by the great speculative systems which more particularly challenge attention in the present day. And—I. **MATERIALISM**. This stands high in the world of thought. It bids us believe only what we can see and smell and taste and touch. It does not concern itself with the origin of the universe, "if it ever had one," or with what happens to living beings after death. Chemistry can account for all things.



Man's intelligence is as the mass of his brain : this thought is " but the expression of molecular changes in the physical matter of his life, and is impossible without phosphorus; his consciousness is only a property of matter : his virtue, the result of a current of electricity, and it and vice are " products in the same sense as are sugar and vitriol." Science, it is said, does not need such an hypothesis as God, who does not exist apart from the mind and imagination of man. 2. But where is there anything in all this to satisfy the thirst for God of which in his highest moments man is so conscious? How can that which is purely physical touch the sense which appreciates a moral world? It is a merit of Auguste Comte to have recognized the necessity of some answer; and he tells us that it is our privilege and our business to love, reverence, and worship " a Being, immense and eternal—Humanity." Not, mark you, a sinless and Divine representative of the race, such as we Christians adore Jesus. Not even an idealized abstraction, which, in the pure realms of thought, might conceivably be separated from the weaknesses inseparable from humanity. But men know man too well to worship him. All history shows that materialism cannot silence the religious yearnings of the soul of man. Robespierre tried, but failed, as all such endeavours must. A nation of Atheists is yet to be discovered. Man is ever feeling after God. II. DEISM : this likewise fails because it reduces God to a mere force : and—III. PANTEISM also, because if God be in everything He is in human crimes as well as in human virtues. To assert God's presence in His works is one thing; to identify Him with them is another. His omnipresence is a necessary attribute of His Deity; while if He could be identified with nature He would cease to be. If the mystery of life, which attests God's presence in the natural world, was ever felt in all its awe and its beauty by any human soul, it was felt by the great Augustine: Witness the often quoted passage of the Confessions in which he tells us why nature was in his eyes so beautiful, by telling us how nature had led him up to God. " I asked the earth, and it said : ' I am not He ' ; and all that is upon it made the same confession. I asked the sea and the depths, and the creeping things that have life, and they answered : ' We are not thy God; look thou above us.' I asked the breezes and the gales; and the whole air, with its inhabitants, said to me : ' Anaximenes is in error, I am not God.' I asked the heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars : ' We too,' said they, ' are not the God whom thou seekest.' And I said to all the creatures that surrounded the doors of my fleshly senses, ' Ye have said to me of my God that ye are not He; tell me somewhat of Him.' And with a great voice, they exclaimed, ' He made us.' " " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." What could He do more in order to convince us that He is not merely a Force or an Intelligence, but a Heart? At the feet of Him who could say, " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," we understand, and rest upon the certainty, that God is moral as well as intellectual " light, and that in Him is no darkness at all." When a man's hold upon this creed is gone, his thoughts fall back, at best, upon the more rudimentary and less adequate ideas of the Godhead; the darker mysteries of the world's history present themselves with more painful force; and the mind tends inevitably, in the last resort, either to Deism or to Pantheism; to a Deism which just permits God to create, and then dismisses Him from His creation; or to a Pantheism which identifies Him with all the moral evil in the universe, and ends by propagating the worship of new Baals and Ashteroths. But God being really alive, His existence is a fact with which no other fact that the human mind can come to recognize will possibly compare. For nothing that can occupy our thoughts can really compare with it in point of absorbing and momentous import. Beyond everything else, it must have imperious claims upon the time and thought and working power of every human being who has ever felt, in any serious degree, the unspeakable solemnity of life and death. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The thirst after God*:—It has been often said that the Psalms are out of place in our common daily service. Numbers come to church, at least on Sundays, whose minds cannot be especially devout. Yet language is provided for their use which expressed the most fervent longings of the most devout men. Such language may meet, now and then, the aspirations of the private suppliant. Even he must often find the Psalms far above the measure of his thoughts, so high that he cannot attain to them. How, then, can we offer them month after month to an ordinary English congregation, as if they could possibly speak what it was feeling? Complaints of this kind are never to be lightly dismissed. They indicate a sense of the sacredness of words, which we should honour in others and try by all means to cultivate in

ourselves. Others will say that only believers should use such words: they are false of all others. The unbeliever will only thirst for some portion that will make him forget God. But do not those who call themselves believers know that that estrangement from God, which they know so well how to describe, was once their own experience, and they are liable to its repetition? The feeling, the thirst after God, may then co-exist with another feeling of the very opposite kind. Then deadly enemies dwell very near to each other, and carry on their conflict within him. Do they give themselves credit for anything but being aware of the strife, and knowing where the strength is which may make the better side victorious? If they are calling themselves believers upon some other ground, in some other sense than this, I should wholly dispute the claim which they put forward to be in sympathy with those who trusted in God and thirsted for Him in other days. But if this is the nature and character of their belief, then I do not see how they can possibly exclude any from participation in these prayers and hymns; how they can find fault with the Church for adopting them into her worship, and giving them, with the most utter indiscrimination, to all her children. In so far as we are occupied with our own special interests, in so far the psalm is alien to us. But where the minister is in union with his congregation, and the members feel that they have relations with each other; it is then that David's harp gives out its music, and we in this distant land and age can accompany it. It has been the solace of many on sick-beds, because they are longing for fellowship with the Church of God. I. When he says, as here, "MY SOUL IS ATHIRST," he describes no rare or peculiar state of feeling. It is as common as the thirst of the body. All men have it because they are men. For all seek happiness, though they know not what they mean. II. The psalmist said, "My soul is athirst for God." He knew that all men in the nations round him were pursuing gods. Pleasure was a god, wealth was a god, fame was a god. Just what the Jew had been taught was that the Lord his God was one Lord. He was not to pursue a god of pleasure or wealth or fame, nor any work of his own hands or conception of his own mind. For he was made in the image of the God, who was not far from him. Often it seemed as if there were no such God, and the Israelite was met with the taunt, "Where is thy God?" He does not pretend that he is not disturbed by these taunts. All he can do is to ask that if He is, He will reveal Himself. And that he does ask courageously. "I will say unto the God of my strength, Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why go I thus heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me?" And then he was able to say to his vexed soul, "O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank Him, which is the help of my countenance and my God." What a baptism of fire was this! What a loss of all the privileges of an Israelite, that he might find the ground upon which Israel was standing! For thus he learnt that the thirst for God is the thirst of man. The thirst for happiness means this, ends in this. The thirst of his soul could not be satisfied with anything but Him who both kindles and satisfies the thirst of all human souls. III. "EVEN FOR THE LIVING GOD"—so the psalmist goes on. It is no idle addition to the former words. The gods of the heathen were dead gods. They were unable to perform any of the acts of men; could neither see nor feel nor walk. There is a thirst of the soul to create something in its likeness; but the first and deepest thirst is to find in what likeness it is itself created: whence all its living powers are derived. Here, too, the psalmist is, in the strictest sense, the man. The heart and flesh of all human beings, whether they know it or not, are crying out for the living God. And they do give a thousand indications everywhere, that they cannot be contented with dead gods, or with any religious notions and forms which try to put themselves in the place of a living God. IV. "WHEN SHALL I COME AND APPEAR BEFORE GOD?"—so the psalmist ends. It is a bold petition. Should it not rather have been, "O God, prepare me for the day when I must appear before Thee"? So we modify such words. But they uttered them in their plain and simple meaning. It meant, not that they thought there was less need than we think there is, of preparation for meeting God, but that they felt they could not prepare themselves, and that God Himself was preparing them. They held that He prepared them for His appearing by teaching them to hope for it. Oh! why not say to the cities of England, as the prophets of old said to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God"? Why not answer the calumny that we worship a tyrant on the throne of heaven by saying: "This Jesus, the deliverer of captives, the opener of sight to the blind, the friend of the poor, is He in whom we see the Father. For such a Being we know that there is an infinite thirst in your souls,

because we have it in our own, and we are even such as you are. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The religious faculty*.—I. ITS REALITY. "My soul thirsteth for God." Do human beings desire God in that intense way? We are all acquainted with some physical sensations of that intensity. We have all felt thirst, or at least we can imagine thirst, which is almost delirious in its desire for water. But is there anything in the human mind in connection with God that is as intense as that? I dare say most of us have had feelings to some fellow-creature that this would hardly be too strong to describe. The absence or the loss of somebody has made us sick with desire, almost sick unto death, whereas the return or the presence of the same person has made us indescribably happy. But are there any feelings in the human heart towards God comparable to these? Is there in human nature a thirst for God to be compared with the thirst for knowledge or the thirst for beauty? Open a book like St. Augustine's "Confessions," or "The Imitation of Christ," and on every page you will find it. II. ITS UNIVERSALITY. Wherever men are found they are religious beings. Religion is an element of human life everywhere, and everywhere it is an ideal and a refining element. In fact it is now generally acknowledged that the blossom and flower of every civilization is its religion, and even the most sceptical of men will now sometimes allow that the rational satisfaction of man's religious nature is, and always will be, the greatest desideratum of the human race. III. ITS MANIFESTATIONS. 1. It is often an intellectual thirst, a thirst for an explanation of the tangle and mystery of existence. You have a classical illustration of that in the Book of Job, where the hero, blinded with the whirl and confusion of things, cries out for a sight of Him who rides upon the storm. 2. Still oftener, perhaps, the thirst for God is a thirst of the heart. All men, especially all women, know in some degree what it is to wish to be loved, to be thought about and cared for. These sentiments, as a rule, find their satisfaction in the domestic affections, and sometimes these are so satisfying as to fill up the whole desire. But this satisfaction is not conceded to all; and from some who have had it, it is taken away; and I rather think that all sometimes feel that they require love larger, more sympathetic, more intelligent and enduring than any human love. In fact it is only the love of God that can thoroughly satisfy the heart. 3. The thirst for God is still oftener, and more conspicuously, a thirst of the conscience. The conscience, although generally a very quiet element in our nature, may become a very clamorous one. It cries out for deliverance from guilt. It cries out for deliverance from temptation and sin. And the reason why Christianity has been such a consolation to mankind is because it has so thoroughly answered. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Under the lashes of conscience, man cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But Christianity answers, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." IV. ITS CULTURE. The religious faculty requires constant exercise, if there is to be any comprehensiveness and certainty of religious experience. Are you cultivating your religious faculty, or are you neglecting it, and allowing it to atrophy? 1. The first thing that is needed for the culture of the religious faculty is the careful observance of the Sabbath. The cessation from toil, the preaching of the Gospel, the atmosphere of peace, the influence of united worship, tend to call the religious nature out, encouraging it to revel in its native element. 2. The other opportunity for this kind of culture is prayer. That brings the religious nature nearer to its object than anything else. I remember, when a boy, hearing some one say, "backsliding always begins at the closet door." (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Wanting God*.—This psalm is one of those said to be composed for, or by, the Sons of Korach. They are known to have been a family of Levites, whose inheritance lay in the wild country, on the eastern side of Jordan. I. WHAT DID THIS LEVITE FIND THAT HE WANTED? Man is a composite being, body, mind, and soul. Presently we discover that body and mind are but the agents of the soul, which is the real self; and the soul's cry is for God, the living God. This Levite thought that he wanted Jerusalem, and the Temple, and the sacrifices, and the feasts, and the music. But a self-revealing time came, and he found that his soul was really craving for God. His love was athirst for God. Its natural dependence was athirst for God. But the point of the self-discovery is put into the expression, "for the living God." It was no mere rain-pool, still and stagnant, round which he saw those gazelles gathering. It was the fresh, living stream. As they drank, it flowed fast, cool and refreshing. They were living waters. He found he could satisfy his cravings with no mere knowledge of God, no mere teachings about God.

He craved for personal contact. He wanted personal relations. To be sure that God lived, in the sense of being active, interested, really concerned in his concerns. II. WHEN DID THIS LEVITE FIND OUT THAT HE WANTED GOD? It was not brought home to him while engaged in the Temple services. In some sense God's service stood in front of God. It came to him when he was away from his usual scenes, and when he was placed in unusual circumstances. Everything around him was suggestive of peaceful, religious meditation. It was all so wild, so free, so open. It was all so quiet. The routine of life prevents our troubling about the thirsting of the soul, but the routine of life never allays the thirst. III. HOW THIS LEVITE RESPONDED TO THE AWAKENED THIRST FOR GOD. That thirst drove him to the hill-top. It always urges a man to seek loneliness, privacy, the silences of nature. The quenchings of the thirst come in the soul-communion with God, in openness to God, in conscious kindness with God, in holy joy in Him. And then awakens a new and intenser interest in all the means of peace. God waits to meet our thirst. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good." (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Thirsting for God*:—Taken in its original sense, the words of our text apply only to that strange phenomenon which we call religious depression. But I venture to take them in a wider sense than that. It is not only Christian men who are cast down, whose souls "thirst for God." It is not only men upon earth whose souls thirst for God. All men, everywhere, may take this text for theirs. I. There is in every man AN UNCONSCIOUS AND UNSATISFIED LONGING AFTER GOD, AND THAT IS THE STATE OF NATURE. Experience is the test of that principle. And the most superficial examination of the facts of daily life, as well as the questioning of our own souls, will tell us that this is the leading feature of them—a state of unrest. II. There is a CONSCIOUS LONGING, IMPERFECT, BUT ANSWERED; AND THAT IS THE STATE OF GRACE—the beginning of religion in a man's soul. If it be true that there are, as part of the universal human experience, however overlaid and stifled, these necessities, the very existence of the necessities affords a presumption, before all evidence, that, somehow and somewhere, they shall be supplied. If I, made by God who knew what He was doing when He made me, am formed with these deep necessities, with these passionate longings,—then it cannot but be that it is intended that they should be to me a means of leading me to Him, and that there they should be satisfied. III. There is a PERFECT LONGING PERFECTLY SATISFIED; AND THAT IS HEAVEN. We shall not there be independent, of course, of constant supplies from the great central Fulness, any more than we are here. Thirst, as longing, is eternal; thirst, as aspiration after God, is the glory of heaven; thirst, as desire for more of Him, is the very condition of the celestial world, and the element of all its blessedness. Let me put two sayings of Scripture side by side, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God"—"Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." There be two thirsts, one, the longing for God, which, satisfied, is heaven; one, the longing for cessation of the self-lit fires, and for one drop of the lost delights of earth to cool the thirsty throat, which, unsatisfied, is hell. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The soul's need and God's nature*:—Men like Homer and Dante in secular literature, men like the psalmists in the Bible, take a single image, choose a forcible metaphor, and by their use of these, teach some bold scheme of human life and character, or unveil some hidden fact of human destiny. Now such a scheme of human character, involving at least a hint of human destiny, with abundant and fruitful consequences, is to be found in the text. I. A CHARACTERISTIC NEED OF THE SOUL. We all sufficiently know what is meant by "the soul." What, then, are its necessities? 1. The desire to know. See the curiosity of the child, so keen, so active, so simple, that you and I, in the enervating languor of later life, might well wish we had it back again. What is that desire to know concerned about? Surely the enigma of our being, of the world, of that which is around us, in us, so beautiful, so strange, so startling, yet so real; surely the meaning of this extraordinary, this self-contradictory life—the explanation of this changing scene. It is a clamorous cry which comes from, which proclaims abroad, a need of man. 2. But close upon the heels of curiosity there treads an eager thrilling sense of aspiration, not unmixed with awe. Who has not stood upon the hills at sunset and longed with a vague, wild, passionate longing to pass beyond the bounding clouds. 3. And how, as years go on, we are conscious of the passion of regret which rises as we gaze behind, athwart the receding years? Why is it that, in spite of all our reasoning, we still persist in clothing those early days of earliest childhood with a life which is not all their

own? That field, that flower, that corner of the street, that dear old house, that well-known room—how much gladder, sweeter, better, as we say, than such things, such places now! Why is it, this sweet, this sad regret? You will agree with me, whatever else it may be, at least it is a clamorous cry. And all these cries of the creature—this curiosity, so strong, so keen—this awful aspiration, soaring beyond the stars—and this regret so deep, so passionate—they gather up in one wild wail of need. Oh, cynic though you be, careless though you be—nay, indifferent or hostile though you be to serious thought—tell me what need finds utterance in their voices? Is it not the same, the world-wide, world-old thought of the poor Judean exile on the wild Abarim hills?—"My soul is athirst for God, for the living God." Ah! this eager, unsatisfied humanity, what cries it for but Him!

II. CAN THAT CRY BE ANSWERED? Is it heard? does any answer come? I am told in Revelation that there is a God, supreme in power, of essential spotless holiness, the Absolute of Perfection, the Changeless in Beauty, comprehending thus in Himself, it would seem, all imagined or imaginable objects of the desiring mind. Is not that enough? Strange creatures that we are, it is not. You and I want to know, nearer, more precisely His nature and His character. For you and I are each possessors of a mysterious gift. We want to know, and till we know we cannot rest. That gift is the mystery of life, and it makes the little lad whom you and I met wandering half-clothed and ill-fed and uncared-for an object of more arresting interest than the savage mystery of the wild Atlantic. "Is there a further cry?" I think there is. If there be one thing with which you surely must be, with which I certainly am impressed, it is our own, our astonishing individuality. To each, every truth of the Christian creed has its own abiding import thence. "What matters it to me"—so every one of you may say—"if though all in this congregation each find the satisfaction of his wants, I yet miss mine?" Whatever be the special facts of your life and mine, we are all met, the paths of all are traversed, by one ghastly spectre, and that spectre is our individual sin. Sin! You have your own, not mine, not another's. Does one sin hold me down? Then the longing of my better self is to be delivered. Who can do it? Who? I ask who? I open the pages of the Gospel story, and straight I come across Jesus Christ. A startling figure! An unrivalled picture! None other like that in history. Julius Cæsar? They wrote a powerful monograph about him the other day, and at the close drew a parallel between him and Christ. It is difficult surely for any one to avoid disliking in it the bad taste, even should he not shrink from it as a kind of blasphemy. The conqueror of Gaul was indeed a striking figure. But how unlike that other! "Athirst for God." If so, thank God the Father for His love, for indeed He loves you; honour the bleeding wounds whence flowed the precious blood; praise the eternal Spirit, through whom the sacrifice was offered, and by whom you are sanctified. Yes, glory be to the God who was, and is, and is to come, who hath loved us with eternal love, who gives us—the way-worn, the weary—peace in believing. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *From man to God*:—Contrast this with a passage in Miss Martineau's autobiography, where she tells us that, having got rid of the last remnants of her old beliefs, she felt as if a weight were removed: to use her own figure, as the faded rose recovers its freshness when relieved of the pressure of the atmosphere by being placed under the bell glass of an air-pump, so did her spirits open out when no longer oppressed by the overshadowing presence of a higher Power. With all thought of God gone, she could breathe freely, and find herself at home in the vast universe. The contrast is striking, suggestive, affecting. In the one case, yearning for God; in the other, relief through being able to say, "There is no God." Can it be, then, that the modern Atheists are shaking off a nightmare, and that the psalmist's thirst for God was simply a disease incidental to the childhood of the human race? Our answer is that whatever difficulties may lie on the Theistic side, those on the Atheistic are immeasurably greater. Let us begin with a definition. We mean by God, no misty abstraction, no attenuated personality, but the Will which purposes and performs, the Fountain and Administrator of law; also the Love within which all life is embraced. He is the God with whom Enoch walked, of whom David sang, before whom Elijah stood. Now we remark—I. MOMENTS OF ATHEISM ARE KNOWN BY MOST MEN. Who has not neared that bottomless gulf and breathed the malaria which hangs over it? But this was temporary, a passing phase, which we met and mastered. The clouds broke, the light of morning dawned. Now, which condition was the state of health? That of Atheism or Faith? In the one did we feel as she did whose

and words we have quoted; or was it in the other that we felt that soundness and sanity were come to us again? Can, then, that which acts thus healthfully be nothing but a baneful poison? The Truth which seems so essential to the soul's health, has it no basis in reality? Is it a lie? And, if so, are lies so medicable? Who can believe it? II. MOMENTS OF MORAL WEAKNESS—these, too, we all have known. But experience says that, in the very greatest emergency, let the thought of God come in, and virtue in her utmost peril is secure. Can that thought, then, be false? Or it may be duty distresses us. Failure takes the heart out of us. But the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee," heartens us again. But if there be no God, this belief is a falsehood. True, we are greatly blessed by this belief in mind, in heart, in spirit, and yet, on the Atheistic creed, we owe all to a cheat. And we may ask, What is virtue when it is not fed from this root? How apt it is to degenerate into a cold calculation of profit and loss, and to have for soul Pride instead of Self-surrender. Only belief in the living God can give to it its real beauty and charm. Whence, without such belief, could come the light and warmth under whose quickening influence its blossoms open, and its fruit grows mellow? Does virtue, indeed, owe all her choicest comeliness to the arctic darkness of a lie? And what would become of duty to our fellows were faith in the living God gone? What would become of charity and all her tender ministries? who will promise her continuance in well-doing in spite of ingratitude, and scorn and persecution? Is, then, that which does preserve her and make her such a blessing due to some strange delusion only? III. MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION. For there are times when we are uplifted beyond ourselves, and reverence and trust and love kindle into a consuming fire. Would that such moments were oftener and more abiding. But whenever they come they are always associated with God. Are we, then, duped during these seasons of exalted enjoyment? Are we believing a lie? A harmonious life, also, such as those live "with whom abide the melodies of the everlasting chimes," seems impossible without vigorous belief in God. The just live by faith. But what if that be false? IV. THERE ARE MOMENTS OF TRIAL AND CALAMITY. At such times have we not been saved by trust in Him who is "a very present help in trouble"? Is this, too, a dream? Was there no heart to respond, no hand to bind up? "Nothing"—so says one—"but the infinite Pity is sufficient for the infinite Pathos of human life." But is there no such Pity? It is the age of Pessimism, and men are asking, "Is life worth living?" But who are they who ask? Not the poor, decent, hard-working, God-fearing man, but lounging cynics at West End Clubs. No, we believe in God the Father. If that be dream, let me dream. (*Thomas G. Rose.*) **When shall I come and appear before God?**—*Appearing before God. Appearance before God here and hereafter.*—These words express—I. FIRM BELIEF IN THE ESPECIAL PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE ORDINANCES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. We are always in God's sight, but He is especially near in the sanctuary. These ordinances have this for their great end, to bring us near God. And Christians have found it so. Therefore—1. Guard against hypocrisy in worship. God is there. We are careful how we appear there to our fellow-men. Be so in regard to God. 2. Our hope of good in worship must have the presence of God with us. Cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 32. 3. What thanks are due to the Lord Jesus Christ who hath made way for our appearance before God. 4. What a blessing to have many houses of God in one nation. II. AN EARNEST LONGING AFTER DIVINE ORDINANCES. 1. How little of this there is amongst man. 2. How well it is to have such desire. 3. What unhappy clogs these fleshly, sinful bodies are to the mind. But there is a blessed assembly of better worshippers above. Awake our faith and desire to join them. (*Isaac Watts, D.D.*) *Appearance before God hereafter.*—There are two such appearances. I. AT THE JUDGMENT. At the moment of death our souls appear before God for judgment. 1. Let the sinner therefore consider that, though he may be willing to come to the sanctuary now, then it is under terrible constraint. 2. Here they appear in disguise, as saints; there openly as sinners. 3. They must take notice of God then, though they do not now. 4. There God will be on the throne of judgment; here He is on the throne of grace. 5. Here is frequent appearance, there but once, and is for ever driven from His presence. Let the sinner then examine himself as to his state now. II. IN GLORY IN HEAVEN. What a difference for the Christian between then and now. 1. Now he is one of a mixed assembly, then all will be holy. 2. Now he is among a few who worship God, but then amongst millions. 3. Now we worship for preparation, there for enjoyment. 4. Now, imperfectly; there, with complete worship. 5. Now, with

many discouragements; then, with everlasting consolations. May we never be missing there. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?**—*Where is thy God?*—Surely a searching, solemn query. Not a question, notice, of having, or not having, a god; not a question as to what, but where? Every man has some kind of god, for the religious instinct is an important part of every man's constitutional make-up. Every child is born with the germ of conscience. It must be so, else why do we find in our children a chord that vibrates at the touch of religious story or appeal? Upon our idea of God centres our ideas of religion, of sin, of prayer, of consecration, and of service. I. **YOUR RELIGION WILL BE WHATEVER YOUR IDEA OF GOD IS.** Religion has two acts—to know what is true of God, and to express that knowledge in life. It is personal experience that gives life to one's creed, not cold type. A blind man's world can be measured with a cane. But to be able to say, "Now I see," speedily leads on to "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Experience is the soil out of which the best creeds grow. Conduct must tally with conviction. II. **YOUR IDEA OF SIN WILL BE SHAPED BY YOUR IDEA OF GOD.** They stand or fall together. The exceeding sinfulness of sin will never fill you with shrinking abhorrence until you see God as a God of holiness and purity and righteousness. If your idea of God be that of the Pantheist, or that of the philosopher, or that of the materialist, your standard of holiness will rise no higher than your idea of God. What greater reason can we have for hating sin than to know that it drove the nails into the hands of our blessed Lord? III. **YOUR IDEA OF THE VALUE OF PRAYER WILL HINGE UPON YOUR IDEA OF GOD.** Look at David's prayer: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." How could David utter a prayer like that if he believed God to be an impersonal force at work in the universe? The value and power of true prayer lies in its reflex action of the man who prays. You cannot say "our Father" to an impersonal force; nor hold sweet communion with a law, nor pour out your soul's need to a sacred cow. The Pharisee prayed with himself. The Publican talked with God. Penitence is heaven's latch-key. So, too, prayer becomes a good test of character. To prove it, note the objects for which many people pray; the temper in which they pray; the regularity with which they pray, and the period during which they pray. IV. **YOUR CONCEPTION OF CONSECRATION WILL REST UPON YOUR IDEA OF GOD.** To say, "I do now consecrate myself to the service of Christ," is the most solemn thing you can say. You remember what "consecration" meant to the high priest of old. That it must mean to you and me; for anything less noble, less sacred, is unworthy the professed follower of the Master. V. **YOUR IDEA OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR IDEA OF GOD.** If every man of us is to be judged according to the light he has, how can any one afford to spend his time picking out flaws in his neighbour's conduct, instead of improving the little span of life that God has given him by whole-hearted devotion to the service of God. If you believe in the Church as a Divinely-ordained institution, and in the preaching of the Gospel as the Divinely-ordained means of bringing this world back to God; and if you believe that God is able and willing to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from your iniquity, then I call heaven and earth to witness against you that, so long as you hold back your whole-hearted allegiance from Him, you are trifling, you are trifling with God! (*C. H. Jones.*) *Where is thy God?*—This is a question which, in every age, the doubting heart has propounded to itself; and every time it recurs it bespeaks a deeper agony of soul, and demands a profounder answer. The contradictions of our life can neither be ignored nor annihilated. But all depends on how we view the whole—whether in the gloom of despondency, or the shining light of hope. If God is with us anywhere and ever, then everywhere and always. Not only in the height of our exultation, but in the depth of grief and woe. Not only in the glad communion of our sweetest fellowship, but in the chilly isolation of our sheer bereavement. In all the evils of existence—in shame and crime and want—we must believe he is no further from us than in plenty and peace and virtuous delight. There are periods of depression incidental to all flesh, when all around is gloomy, and the outlook drear and blank; when the joys of life appear so few, so fleeting, and so faded; when sin and suffering seem so vast and sure, our lot so hard and burdensome, our whole existence so beset with toil, that the pulse of the spirit beats feeble, faint and low, and the dead weight of sombre misgiving clips the pinions

which we spread, and drags us downward to despondency. At such times we learn the value of example. We call to mind the stories we have heard of peaceful death-beds and triumphant departures. We think of Socrates, with the cup of hemlock in his hand, discoursing sweetly—like the dying swan, his noblest strain his last—concerning the immortality of the soul. We think of Christian martyrs and the saints of old. We see them dying for divergent creeds, yet all alike serene. They walked by faith, not by sight; and therefore they were strong. And anon, as we review that noble host, there rises one above the rest, who is the chief among ten thousand, and the leader of an army by Himself. Who was a man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief, like this our elder brother, the despised and rejected of men? Are our discouragements to be compared to His? If in the midst of a priest-ridden world, a corrupt and worn-out society, even out of the unpromising materials which were all that lay ready to His hand, He never relinquished His sublime idea of building up the kingdom of God, shall we not also rise above our griefs, and lift the drooping head—we in whose cup is mingled that more even measure that God metes out to ordinary men? There is nothing so bad but it may be well, if we wait to see the end. But oh, the good which we discern already! what shall explain that away? The mere refusal of our hearts to acquiesce in despondency—whence comes it, if not from a God in whose embrace we lie secure? The desire which springs spontaneous, like the fountain in the desert, to help and befriend the distressed; the anodyne of sympathy, and the balm of compassion, which gushes in most abundance where sorest need prevails; the love which many waters cannot quench; the devotion of a mother; the attachment of a child; all that makes suffering tender, and sheds beauty upon grief—are these no signs of God? Signs! They are more. They are the beating of a universal pulse, the breathing of a universal soul; they constitute the Godhead of the World. And when we have once discovered the great Father in our hearts, we may go forth courageously to find Him everywhere. (E. M. Geldart, M.A.)

Ver. 4. **When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.—Remembrance of bygone happiness:—**I. THE HAPPINESS OF DAVID'S FORMER CONDITION. 1. The store of company and society which he had with him. Good company is a very blessed and comfortable accommodation in sundry respects. (1) An exercise of men's faculties and the powers and abilities of the mind. (2) A fence against danger and a preservative from sadness and various temptations (Eccl. iv. 10; Prov. xi. 14). (3) An opportunity of doing more good. 2. The place of his resort—the house of God. (1) David's practice. He went himself. He took others along with him. Where others went before him, he followed them, and went with the multitude; where others stayed behind, he drew them on and carried the multitude along with him; and so he did two duties at once, which are both of them observable of ourselves. (2) His privilege. He speaks of it as a mercy which then he enjoyed, but now was deprived of; and so would hereby signify unto us what a great mercy this indeed is. (3) The nature and equality of their employment when there. (1) The proper work of such assemblies—holy and spiritual performances. (2) We are taught also from hence how to employ ourselves when we come to these assemblies; namely, in such duties and performances as are proper and agreeable hereunto. As David went to the house of God in regard of the place, so he was employed in joy and praise in regard of the performances: so should we be likewise; we should not come hither to sleep, to gaze, to talk, to disturb both ourselves and others; but we should come as applying ourselves to the work and business of the time and place, with the voice of joy and praise; as the multitude of those that keep holy-day, as it is here expressed. II. THE IMPRESSION WHICH THE RECALLING HEREOF HAD UPON HIM. His grief was increased. There are none who more bewail the want of the ordinances and means of salvation than those who have formerly enjoyed them, and have been made partakers of them. 1. Because these know what they are. That which makes men to be indifferent in their desires to these matters is because they know not the sweetness which is in them; but now those who have formerly enjoyed them are made sensible in this particular. 2. Their desire is injured and habituated to them; use it is a second nature: now they are accustomed to such holy employments, and therefore they cannot tell how to be without them; it is grievous to them. 3. Satan, and sometimes other enemies, they do also take occasion from



hence to enlarge and increase their grief to them, as here in the text, "Where is now thy God?" (*Thomas Horton, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me! hope thou in God.**—*A prescription for a downcast soul*.—I. **INQUIRY.** "Why art thou cast down?" Many a man is in great spiritual darkness, without knowing, or being able to discover the reason. He has been trying to live rightly, so far as he knows. He has not neglected prayer nor the house of God, and yet God seems to have hidden His face; his peace is gone; his soul is full of harrowing doubts. Christians sometimes forget that they have bodies; and that the condition of their bodies has a good deal to do with the brightness or darkness of their spiritual moods; and now and then a man, through sheer ignorance, persists in some habit of eating or drinking which, by keeping his body in an unhealthful state, correspondingly lowers the tone of his spiritual life. Often the devil which torments him is one that goeth not out but by fasting. 2. Or the cause may lie deeper, in some mental disease—possibly inherited. Cowper. 3. On the other hand, the distress may arise from estrangement between man and God. Peter, when he went out and wept bitterly, was cast down and disquieted as he deserved to be. 4. If you cannot, on inquiry, discover that sin is at the bottom of your disquietude, it may occur to you that God has sent it. Thou art satisfied that the source of thy trouble is Divine; is that something to be disquieted about? Or dost thou fear it will be more than thou canst bear? O reflect that the Father is the husbandman. He is pruning thee that thou mightest bring forth more fruit. Dost thou forget Him who was made perfect through suffering, and who was in all points tempted and tried like as thou art? Why art thou disquieted? Is it because thou cannot not see the end thy God has in view in thy trial, or wilt thou forget that this "light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? II. **REMEMBRANCE.** 1. The psalmist remembers his own experience. Ah, how often we need the psalmist's admonition to his own soul not to forget all God's benefits. They will crowd, at the summons of memory, thickly down to the very edge of to-day's trouble, like the cloud which followed the Israelites down to the marge of the Red Sea; and like that cloud will send light over the troubled waters through which lies the line of march. To-day's trouble will be lighter, and to-day's outlook more hopeful through the remembrance of the blessed past. 2. But this remembrance of the psalmist also takes in God's dealings with His people. No one has such a range of history at his command as the believer who is in trouble; since the history of God's children is largely made up of trouble, and as largely of God's deliverances out of trouble. Sometimes a man is so engrossed with the pleasure and business of the present, that memory has no chance to do her work, and he is in danger of forgetting God's benefits altogether; and so God leads him away alone, whither he does not like to go, but where, cut off from the occupations of the present, he has opportunity to survey the rich and fruitful past, and to grow grateful amid his sorrow. Yea, often the very land of exile is the land of precious memories. Men of old have had their faith, their courage, their patience tried sorely in the very places where our faith and courage and patience are tried; and their experience of God's saving goodness and power calls on us to remember that the God of salvation is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. III. **HOPE.** 1. This hope is in God. Trouble opens a man's eyes to the need of a personal God. True hope, the psalmist's hope, would say, "This loss is God's work; I am God's child; this is God's discipline; through this He may be working out for me something far better than worldly prosperity. The best thing I have left, the thing to which I anchor my present and my future is—God is mine. This matter is all in God's hands, and whatever He may do with me or with my fortune, whether He give me back my prosperity or not, I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." 2. This hope is a different thing from faith, while the operations of the two are nevertheless closely allied. When a physician gives to a sick man a remedy which for the time increases his distress, he does not realize nor feel that the work of restoration is going on; and in the dark places of Christian experience through which God causes a man to pass in the course of His discipline, the man does not always realize that God is doing a beneficent work upon him, or how He is doing it. Then hope comes in. "If we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) **Despondency**.—I. **THE UNREASONABLENESS AND VIRTUAL**

IMPIETY OF THE OVER-ANXIOUS, FOREBODING SPIRIT MANIFESTED BY SO MANY. 1. This spirit is rebuked by your whole experience. The vast preponderance with you has always been on the side of happiness. If you have been long of this foreboding habit, not one in a hundred of the sorrows that you have apprehended has reached you. Those, also, that have overtaken you have been lighter than you feared. 2. What can your anxiety do for you? Can it avert what you dread? No. But it may hasten it. In many respects, our health, our outward well-being, and that of our household, are committed to our own keeping, and can be safely kept only by a self-collected mind and a quiet heart. 3. Sorrow in prospect is much more bitter and grievous than it is in actual experience. Every trial comes with its alleviating circumstances, its mild preparatives, and abounding consolations. Sickness summons sympathy and patience for its ministers. Unmerited disesteem fortifies itself by the testimony of a good conscience. Poverty moves on under the guidance of health and hope. Bereaved affection meets the risen Saviour at the grave-side. 4. Why do you dread aught that can befall you, when none of these things can take place without your Father? Under Him, all things will work together for your good. Lean, then, as children upon His arm, and commit yourselves as children to His keeping. II. INCULCATE THE LESSON OF IMPLICIT TRUST IN A WISE AND PATERNAL PROVIDENCE. 1. An unexplored future is before us. But, as Christians, we have every possible ground for trust and hope; for that unexplored future is in the hands of our Father. 2. We have under God one object of hope continually in view, namely, the growth of our characters; and this is the great end for which, were we wise, we should desire to live. Does He send outward favours and mercies? It is that gratitude may engrave His image on our hearts, and write His law on our lives. Does He remove from us cherished blessings? He takes gifts which we were in danger of loving more than the Giver. He takes wealth that bound our souls to the sordid pathway which He bids us leave. 3. Heaven and eternity, brought to light by Jesus, re-echo the exhortation—"Hope thou in God." Have we the testimony of His love within? Are we living by the law and in the spirit of Christ? Have we the consciousness of pardoned sin and of souls at peace with God? If so, however heavy our outward burdens or sorrows, we may well ask, in self-rebuke, "Why art thou cast down?" etc. (A. P. Peabody.) *Disquietude and hope*.—I. DAVID'S DISQUIETUDE. 1. God's forgetfulness. 2. His own mourning. 3. Enemy's oppression. II. DAVID'S HOPEFULNESS. 1. God is. 2. God is mine. 3. God will yet be praised by me. (*Homiletic Review*.)

Ver. 6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan.—*Soul sorrows and soul reliefs*.—I. SOUL SORROWS. 1. Oppressive. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." They seemed to rest upon his heart as lead. Beneath their weight he sank down into darkness and despair. How often the soul falls prostrate beneath its load of grief and trials. 2. Tumultuous. "Deep calleth unto deep." "Trials," says our dramatist, "come in battalions." In the hour of deep conviction for sin, there comes a moral inundation. 3. Excruciating. "As with a sword," etc. As the physical nerves quiver with agony at the entrance of the sword, so his soul writhed at the reproaches of ungodly men. II. SOUL RELIEFS. 1. Memory. 2. Hope. 3. Prayer. 4. Self-fellowship. "David," says Calvin, "represents himself here as divided into two parts. In so far as he rests through faith in God's promises, he raises himself, equipped with the spirit of an invincible valour against the feelings of the flesh, and at the same time blames his weakness." David here—(1) Inquires of his own soul the cause of his own sorrows; and (2) exhorts it to trust in God. "Hope thou in God." God is the "health of my countenance." He will clear away all the gloom, and make it bright with the sunshine of His love. (*Homilist*.) *My soul is cast down within me*.—There are times when the soul is cast down within us like David's. Strength, courage, hope, are dead. We lose the very sense of freedom, and are as a wreck, borne to and fro helpless on the currents, to be dashed at last on some inhospitable shore. There are inward movements of the spirit, known only to God, which bring us to the same prostration. However it may have been reached, no man of deep human experience is ignorant of David's meaning in our text. I. FORGETTING GOD IS MAN'S NATURAL INSTINCT WHEN HIS SOUL IS CAST DOWN WITHIN HIM. Despair is reckless, and deep misery tends strongly to despair. Job's state of mind, as described in Job iii., was anything but gracious. He was so unutter-

ably wretched that he cursed his very existence. And this is the peril of souls when cast down. They think no one cares for them. I am but a waif on the great moaning ocean; it may drift me as it pleases, and cast me when it has done with me to rot forgotten on the shore. This is the language of many a natural heart in its hour of anguish; and on a broader scale, times of great social or national misery are constantly found to be times of wild, fierce recklessness of truth, honour, dignity, charity, and God. II. CONSIDER THE REASON, NATURE, AND FRUIT OF DAVID'S REMEMBRANCE OF GOD when his "soul was cast down within him." 1. The reason. I will remember Thee, for I am not my own, but Thine. I am bound to measure myself by the measure of Thy love. What does the Incarnation mean, but that God claims us by a right, and holds us by a bond of infinite strength? Nothing worth in ourselves, in Christ we are precious in His sight. 2. The nature of the remembrance. That the Lord was his portion, of which neither earth nor hell could rob him. God was left if all else was lost. And God was his "rock," enduring, unchangeable. And God was the health of his countenance, the spring of his everlasting joy. 3. The fruit of his remembrance of God in the depths—perfect peace. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *Help in God*.—I. AN APPROPRIATION. "O my God." In proportion as you feel your need of anything, and value it, you are anxious to make it your own. II. THE CONFESSION. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Observe, here, the speaker himself. David, a great man who had even reached the throne, is the man who says, "My soul is cast down." Do you imagine that the head never aches that wears a crown? Or that you are more likely to escape the winds and storms by building your house high on the side of the hill? A Christian merchant, some years ago, who had retired from business, and employed his substance in the cause of God, lately said to me, "I have found my troubles increase in life precisely in proportion to the number of my servants, and the growth of my property." Paul says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." This is well. It is not the water without a vessel, if it were as large as the Atlantic, that would sink it; but the water that gets in. While the mind is calm, peaceful, and heavenly, outward distresses are of little importance. But when all is dark without, and gloomy within too, then is he tried. "A man's spirit may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?"—and we may add, who can cure? III. HIS RESOLUTION. "Therefore I will remember Thee." Ah, this is not a natural resolution: we are naturally alienated from the life of God. He destroys every drop of water in our vessels, in order that we may be compelled either to perish of thirst, or to inquire after Him, the fountain of living water. And it is well if we remember Him, and ask, "Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Thus it was with Manasseh: in his affliction he sought the Lord God of his fathers, and He was found of him. It was thus with the prodigal, in the parable; when he began to be in want, he said, "I will arise and go to my father." How many have done this since! IV. A SPECIFICATION. "I will remember thee from the land of Jordan," etc. Are there not spots toward which you can look, where God perhaps freed your mind from a grievous snare and temptation, and made you free indeed—where perhaps God commanded a wonderful deliverance for you—where He turned the valley of death into the morning—where at evening-tide it was made light. These Mizars, these little hills, are worth their weight in gold. (*W. Jay.*) *The remembrance of God the result of mental depression*.—I. DEVOUT CONFIDENCE. "O my God." 1. Mine by natural right (Job. x. 8; Ps. cxix. 73; cxxxix. 13; Zech. xii. 1; Heb. xii. 9). 2. Mine by personal preference (Ps. lxxiii. 1-8; lxxiii. 25). 3. Mine by adopting love (Jer. iii. 19; Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6). 4. Mine by Divine appropriation. 5. Mine by public avowal (Isa. xlv. 5). II. MENTAL DEPRESSION. This may result—1. From bodily infirmities (Isa. xxxviii. 14, 15). 2. From backsliding of heart. Defects in love, zeal, diligence. 3. From inward conflicts. 4. From afflictive bereavements. 5. From the state of mankind (Ps. cxix. 59, 186, 158; Phil. iii. 18). III. A PIOUS REMEMBRANCE OF GOD. 1. Wherever we go, God should be in our recollection. His actual presence; His continual agency; what He is in Himself and to His people. 2. The remembrance of God is the most effectual antidote against mental depression (2 Cor. iv. 17; Heb. xii. 11). The text may serve to remind us, by way of inference—1. That man is born to trouble. The best of men may be disquieted and depressed: "without are fightings, and within are fears." 2. That pious people are accustomed to pour out their

complaints to God. 8. That men who have no interest in God have no refuge in the hour of trouble; for vain is the help of man. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Religious melancholy*.—1. The first case is of those who are apt to think that the reformation of their lives hath not proceeded from a sincere love of God, and an unwillingness to displease Him; but from a mere dread of those punishments which He hath threatened. (1) Fear is one of the passions God has planted in our souls, as well as love; they are both the creatures of His wisdom and power; and whatever He did put in us was for some end, and may have a good use. Wherefore, when the passion of fear doth serve the end for which God grafted it in our minds, there can be no doubt but He will approve the good effects which it doth produce. (2) God hath enforced all the laws He hath given to the children of men by threatenings as well as by promises; but as promises are to work upon our love, so threats are to excite our fears; God having made the motives to our obedience to answer the different passions with which He hath endowed our souls. (3) Our Saviour and His disciples address themselves not only to the passion of love, but also to that of fear: which they never would have done had they been conscious that the sacrifices of fear would not have ascended up to heaven with a grateful savour. 2. Some serious Christians complain of a want of inclination to holy things, and a coldness in their devotions. They do not come to God's house, nor address themselves to their prayers, with such an appetite as they do to the business of the world; but want earnest and fervent desires for the success of the petitions. Now, in abatement of their trouble, give me leave to lay the following observations before them. (1) The difference of degrees of affections with which men serve God often depends upon the difference of their tempers and constitutions. God will measure their obedience by the sincerity of their minds, that lies in their own power; and not by the difference of their constitutions, which was not made by themselves. (2) They who are not carried by their passions into the service of God, but render worship to Him upon rational motives, because He is the giver of all good things, seem to act upon a higher and more sublime principle: for notwithstanding they are destitute of that pleasing warmth in their passions which provokes others to pray unto God, and to be thankful unto Him, yet they do not cease to celebrate His praise, because it is their duty to do it, and because reason suggests that they ought to make grateful acknowledgments of His infinite mercies. (3) The most zealous are not always the best men. (4) The most holy servants of God cannot maintain an equal warmth in their devotions at all times. (5) What hitherto hath been said about coldness and damps in the minds of men while they are engaged in religious duty has been to comfort those who are exceedingly grieved at it. Now, notwithstanding it is not to be expected, nor necessary, that these innocent persons should meet with a complete cure of their grief, yet I must tell them that nothing will more enliven their spirits in the service of God than deliberate meditations of Him and of themselves before they enter upon any part of Divine worship. 3. I come to the case of those unhappy persons who have naughty and sometimes blasphemous thoughts start in their minds while they are exercised in the worship of God, and to fear that God hath utterly cast them off. That their case is not so dangerous as they apprehend it, I shall endeavour to show by the following considerations. (1) Because these frightful thoughts do for the most part proceed from the disorder and indisposition of the body. (2) Because they are mostly good people who are exercised with them. (3) Because it is not in the power of those disconsolate Christians, whom these bad thoughts so vex and torment, with all their endeavours to stifle and suppress them. (4) They who labour under the burden of such dismal thoughts are seldom betrayed into any great or deliberate sin. For they, having a very low opinion of the condition of their souls, are jealous of the least temptations. Which is the cause they commonly set a strict guard over their words and actions. Advice for behaviour under these perplexing disorders of mind, and for recovery from them. (1) Frequently observe how your thoughts are employed. Men cannot think foolishly and act wisely. Besides, idle thoughts are neighbours to bad ones, and there is a straight and short passage from one to the other. (2) Endeavour to keep all your passions within due bounds, since storms of passion confound the soul, and make way for evil thoughts. (3) Do not leave your calling, nor forsake the post wherein Providence has placed you. There is always more melancholy to be found in a cloister than in the market-place. (4) When you find these thoughts creeping upon you, be not mightily dejected, as if they were certain tokens of your reprobation.

tion. For so far as they depend upon the indisposition of the body, which for the most part they chiefly do, I take them no more to be marks of the Divine displeasure than sickness, or losses, or any other calamity you may meet with in the world. When these troublesome thoughts begin to stir, do not fall into any violent passion, which will abate the courage and shatter the resolutions of your soul; but having first commended your miserable case to the tender care and compassions of your Heavenly Father, who will not let you be afflicted above measure, endeavour with a meek and sedate temper quietly to bear them. (5) Do not think the worse of God for them, or accuse His providence of want of care of you. For He might have permitted such thoughts to have continued perpetually, or at least to have visited you much oftener, and in a more frightful manner, and all this without the least diminution of His justice. (6) Let not these afflicting thoughts discourage you from the exercise of your devotions; nor tempt you to omit, or negligently discharge any one Christian office or duty. (*Bishop Moore.*)

*Depression of spirits in Christians:—I. THE CAUSES.* 1. In many cases melancholy proceeds from bodily weakness. 2. Another cause is a habit which some have of judging themselves, not from the Word of God, but from the words of men. 3. They who seek God and endeavour to serve Him, in some instances, form too high expectations of assurance and of comfort. They expect clearer revelations of Divine things; brighter evidence of their justification, and greater joy in the Holy Ghost, than is promised them in this present world. 4. Another cause of discouragement, or deep concern in Christians who have been for some time disciples, is the advancement they have made in spiritual knowledge. Every succeeding year they appear to themselves more sinful and less worthy than in years past. They think more, also, of what is at stake, and what it is to lose their souls. 5. There is also a plain distinction between the doubting of unbelief and the doubting which is through infirmity; as there is also between the sins of infidels and of weak believers.

*II. THEIR USE.* They are profitable—1. For the trial of your faith. "The Lord would have those who walk in the light never forget what it is to sit in darkness and the shadow of death. A grieved spirit is the best foundation of a faithful heart." 2. These desponding apprehensions are a powerful remedy for self-righteousness and spiritual pride. 3. By this depression of spirits, to which good men are subject, you are taught how little confidence can be placed in your religious feelings, or the mere state of your passions. In a spiritual sense it is sometimes "better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting."

*III. WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THIS DEJECTION?* Do as the psalmist did; put your trust in God. How far religious sorrow may be profitable for you, how far necessary, He only knows. It seems to us more desirable to rejoice in the Lord than to mourn His absence. (*Bishop Griswold.*)

*Sweet stimulants for the fainting soul:—I. THE COMPLAINT.* 1. The causes of our being cast down are very numerous. Sometimes it is pain of body; peradventure a wearying pain, which tries the nerves, prevents sleep, distracts our attention, drives away comfort, and hides contentment from our eyes. Often, too, has it been debility of body; some secret disease has been sapping and undermining the very strength of our life. 2. Let us pass now from the most obvious to the more subtle causes of soul-dejection. This complaint is very common among God's people. When the young believer has first to suffer from it, he thinks that he cannot be a child of God; "for," saith he, "if I were a child of God, should I be thus?" What fine dreams some of us have when we are just converted! We know not what we are born to in our second birth, and when trouble comes upon us it surprises us. 3. Let me go a step further, and say that the disease mentioned in our text, although it is exceedingly painful, is not at all dangerous. When a man has the toothache it is often very distressing, but it does not kill him. In like manner, God's children are much vexed with their doubts and fears, but they are never killed by them. 4. I would remark, yet further, that a man may actually be growing in grace while he is cast down; aye, and he may really be standing higher when he is cast down than he did when he stood upright. When we sink the lowest in our own esteem, we rise the highest in fellowship with Christ, and in knowledge of Him. To be cast down is often the best thing that could happen to us. Do you ask, "Why?" Because, when we are cast down, it checks our pride. Were it not for this thorn in the flesh; we should be exalted beyond measure. Besides, when this downcasting comes, it sets us to work at self-examination. Another benefit that we derive from being cast down is that it qualifies us to sympathize with others.

*II. THE TWO REMEDIES HERE MEN-*

TIONED. 1. A reference of ourselves to God. If thou hast a trouble to bear, the best thing for thee to do is not to try to bear it at all, but to cast it upon the shoulders of the Eternal. Often, when I call to see a troubled Christian, do you know what he is almost sure to say? "Oh, sir, I do not feel this—and I do fear that—and I cannot help thinking the other!" That great I is the root of all our sorrows, what I feel, or what I do not feel; that is enough to make any one miserable. It is a wise plan to say to such an one, "Oh yes! I know that all you say about yourself is only too true; but, now, let me hear what you have to say about Christ." What a change would come over our spirits if we were all to act thus! 2. The grateful remembrance of the past. You have known the sweetness of Jesu's love, yet you are cast down! Shame upon you! Pluck off those robes of mourning, lay aside that sackcloth and those ashes, down from the willows snatch your harps, and let us together sing praises unto Him whose love and power and faithfulness and goodness shall ever be the same. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Religious depression and its remedy:*—I. THE SIGN OF RELIGIOUS DEPRESSION. What has caused it? 1. The faithlessness of friends and kindred. Bitter as it may be to feel the want of respect, of reverence, of obedience, of love from the children that are dear to us, that bitterness is intensified when memory testifies that we ourselves caused the evil by our unwisdom, neglect, or excess of tenderness. 2. The sneer of enemies. To many sensitive natures this is the most painful form of persecution. 3. The hiding of God's face. II. THE REMEDY. 1. Faith remembering. 2. Faith hoping. If you turn your back to the sun your shadow will be before you, but if you turn your face to the sun your shadow will be behind you, and you see it not. If you turn your back on God dark shadows will cross your path, thick darkness will be before you; but with your face towards God you will see light in His light, the darkness is past and the true light shineth. 3. Faith triumphing. On the Welsh coast there is a small rocky island with a lighthouse, and in the lighthouse a bell, which on stormy nights rings out its solemn warning to the approaching mariner. When all is calm the bell is not heard, it hangs mute; but when the winds become fierce, and the waves dash high, the bell is set going. It was the storm of trouble that awoke the full harmony of David's harp. (R. Roberts.)

*Disappointment:*—The path of life is strewn with the fallen blossoms of hope. I. GOD OFTEN DISAPPOINTS US TO TEACH US SUBMISSION TO HIS WILL. Many and painful experiences are necessary before the natural self-will and self-sufficiency are expelled from the heart. II. Disappointments are sent us because GOD MEANS TO GIVE US SOMETHING BETTER THAN WHAT WE HAVE CHOSEN FOR OURSELVES. This is a most familiar experience. We have set our heart upon the attainment of some particular good. God knew better than we did, and in His love He refused to give us what would have been unsuitable to us. III. GOD DISAPPOINTS US AT PRESENT, TO GIVE US WHAT WE SEEK AT SOME BETTER TIME. Illustrate by Joseph's disappointment when forgotten by the butler. But, when his hopes were at last realized, how much richer the inheritance! God's choice of time, as well as God's choice of gift, will always be found to be the wisest and best. IV. OUR SENSE OF DISAPPOINTMENT IS UNREASONABLE AND FOOLISH. We are ready to forget that there is a law of orderly development by which God works out His plans. Would the husbandman have a right to be disappointed when he discovered that the seed he sowed yesterday had not yet even appeared above the soil? And many of our disappointments are as unreasonable. (Evangelical Advocate.)

Ver. 7. **Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.**—*The call of the universe:*—I have long wanted some one whose soul hears to write a poem on this subject, the call of the sea. It has for years been a fancy of mine that the great mysterious, multitudinous voice of the sea is just a composite of all the sounds of the world which have been brought down to it by all the rivers in their courses through the lands. You will hear the tinkle and drip of pellucid springs hidden deep in remote hill countries; the rattling laughter of summer streams that have caught up on their way the rustling of leaves and sedges, the piping of birds, the lowing of cattle, the shouts and merry-making of children, the great commingled murmur of manifold labour. All these the vast world-embracing sea has taken in and blended, and harmonized into its own eternal call. It is deep calling unto deep, the soul of the sea to the soul of the man. How wonderful is this interchange, this give and take, in God's world which binds all things into one common life! We are often tempted to forget

that we belong to the universe, that we are part and parcel of its great interchanges, its system of give and take, that the little pulse of our life is quite as essential as the heart-beat of the world or the circulation of the stars. The sea has its countless veins and arteries through all the lands; it is no less true that even our little hidden spring in the lonely old pasture times its small pulse by the heart of the sea. When we leave all these pictures and suggestions of the physical universe and push back into the depths of the unseen and spiritual universe, we may be sure that the same law holds. We will see, first of all, that the spiritual universe is just as vast and complicated in magnitude and structure as is the physical universe. Every smallest, most hidden soul is one with the great central life. It gives and takes with that eternal source. The call of the spiritual universe finds its way into all remotest solitudes. I. **CONSIDER HOW THE SOUL IS CALLED AND LURED BY THE UNIVERSE OF THOUGHT.** I remember well the shock with which I entered the nursery, strewn with toys, and for the first time found its little inmate curled up in the window-seat, lost, absorbed in a book. The same thought came to me as at the spring. What! has this little soul started for the sea? I felt a momentary pang of jealousy that the great invisible powers of thought had sent their irresistible call to the heart of my little child. Then I thought, this young soul is one with that unseen universe. It is only claiming its own. It is simply the deep calling to the deep. After that first call, how we hurry outward, away from things to thoughts. How swiftly are we borne onward into realm after realm in our unseen universe of thought—poetry, prophecy, vision, religion, science, philosophy, art, government. In our universe of thought we have already entered into life eternal, when "time shall be no more" and where "death is swallowed up in victory." II. **THE SAME DEEP, IRRESISTIBLE CALL DRAWS US INTO THE UNIVERSE OF LOVE.** We begin life not only immersed in things, but in self-interest. The little child, like the young bird in the nest, is wholly self-centred, expecting, demanding that all things shall be brought to it. But the kingdom of love lives round about the young child as surely as the kingdom of the air lies round about the young bird in the nest. The one utters as sure a call to the soul as the other to the wing, "Come, come, here is your destiny, your kingdom!" The soul without love in this world is as crippled and helpless as the bird with broken wing. How the kingdom of love opens to us, realm after realm, luring us on! We say it easily, "love is the greatest thing in the world"; then in the next breath we declare that selfishness is the mainspring of all the practical affairs of life. No, no. The greatest does not so easily give up its kingdom. Gravitation does not let go its hold upon the planet because the thistledown floats in summer heavens. The self-regarding life is self-centred. Its motion is centripetal, inward upon itself, to loneliness, bitterness, despair. The unselfish life, the love-life, is ever centrifugal, outward, outward into constantly widening circles. The activities of the world are under the vital impulsions and inspirations of good-will, good-fellowship, truth, love. You can no more reverse this Divine order of brotherhood among men than you can reverse the movement of the stars. How old is love? Old as the human heart, old as God; "for God is love, and he who loveth is born of God and knoweth God." How common is love? Common as breathing and heart-beat. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Consider likewise with what consuming passion men have loved liberty, throwing their lives a willing sacrifice upon her reeking altars. How have men loved truth and justice and righteousness! Out of the depths of the human soul has gone a true answer to the deep call of the invisible universe, its destiny and its home. III. **ANOTHER CALL FROM THE SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE IS TO THE REALM OF SORROW.** We are not good for much until our hearts are broken. Sorrow cleanses our vision of misty humours, restores our spiritual myopia, so that we get a clear long-range outlook upon the verities, the imperishable substances of the inner life. He has lived poorly who has come to mature years and has not been touched by world-pain. No debonair, smug, optimistic Christ need come to this world. Unless the deep cry of humanity has found the deeps in His soul, let Him stay in His comfortable heaven. IV. **AT LAST, THE VOICE THAT SOUNDS THE FINAL DEPTH OF OUR BEING IS THE CALL OF DEATH.** Out of the unseen and eternal the secret message arrives, "Come! Come! Away from all things visible." Your hour is at hand. You must be away to your destiny and home. Then you will know what it is to be alone with death; alone, yet not alone, for out of the depths of the spirit goes up the cry, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" and out of the eternal depths falls the answer, swift and true, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is not the

answer of the universe. For you, in that hour, there is no universe. It is the answer of the eternal Father-heart to the cry of the child-heart, deep to deep, soul to soul. Oh, friends, believe me, we are not the children of houses and streets and shops and markets and offices. We are the children of our Father's universe. (*J. H. Ecob, D.D.*) *Deep calling unto deep*:—"Deep calleth unto deep." It is the profound responsiveness of life which those words utter—the responsiveness of the world and the human nature which inhabits it to one another. How clear they are, and how they call and answer to each other—the world and man! It may be in the region of thought or in the region of action; it may be a great problem awakening the profoundest intelligence, and saying, "Come, find my solution," or it may be a great task summoning the active powers, and saying, "Come, do me"; it may be in an excitement and a tumult which shakes the nature through and through, or it may be in a serene and open calmness which means more than any tumult. The form is nothing; the substance of the experience is everything. "Deep calleth unto deep." It is a great inspiring spectacle when this is seen taking place in a young man's life. There is a beautiful exhilaration in it. The mysterious world lifts up its voice and asks its old unanswered questions—problems which have puzzled all the generations which have come and gone, lo! they are not dead. They are still alive. All that is most serious and earnest in him tells him that their answers must be somewhere. Perhaps he can find what all who have gone before have failed to find. So the best which the young man is leaps to wrestle with the hardest which the world can show; so deep answereth to deep. At the other end of life the same thing comes, only in another way. When the great shadow of the earth lies on the old man's soul, and the light of the life beyond is gathering in the western sky—how often then a patience and a faith, a love and trust and spiritual certainty come forth which all the life has been preparing unconsciously; and in the silent days which wait the end, the soul hears the eternity, and "Deep calleth unto deep." This, then, is what we mean by deep calling unto deep. You see what kind of life it makes. There is another kind of life by contrast with which this kind may perhaps best be understood. There is a life to which the world seems easy, and so in which the strongest powers of the human nature are not stirred. I call that the life in which shallow calleth unto shallow. Like little pools lying in the rock, none of them more than an inch deep, all of them rippling and twinkling in the sunshine and the breeze—so lie the small interests of the world and the small powers of man; and they talk with one another, and one perfectly answers the demand which the other makes. Do you not know all that? The world simply as a place of enjoyment summons man simply as a being capable of enjoyment. It is the invitation of the surface to the surface—of the surface of the world to the surface of the man. What shall we say of this? It is real. It is legitimate. In its degree and its proportion it is good; but made the whole of life and cut off from connection with the deeper converse between the world and the soul, it is dreadful. The world does say to us, "Enjoy"; and it is good for us to hear her invitation. But for the world to say, and for us to hear, nothing better or deeper than "Enjoy" is to turn the relation between the world and man into something hardly better than which exists between the corn-field and the crows. Only when the deeper communion, rich and full and strong, is going on below, between the depths of life and the depths of man—only then is the surface communion healthy and natural and good. I have spoken of deep calling upon deep, which is great and noble; and of shallow calling upon shallow, which is unsatisfactory and weak. The words of David suggest to me also that there is such a thing as deep calling unto shallow—by which I mean, of course, the profound and sacred interests of life crying out and finding nothing but the slight and foolish and selfish parts of a man ready to reply. There are a host of men who will not leave great themes and tasks alone and be content to live trivially among trivial things. They are too enterprising, too alive for that. They have perception enough to hear the great questions and see the great tasks; but they have not earnestness and self-control enough to answer them with serious thought and strong endeavour; so they sing their answer to the thunder, which is not satisfied or answered. Now let us turn and, with another ear, listen to the shallow calling to the deep. When the mere superficial things of life, which are all legitimate enough in their true places and enlisting their own kind of interest, aspire to lay hold of man's serious anxiety and to enlist his earnest thought, then there is born a sense of disproportion just the opposite of that of which I have been speaking—a disproportion which seems to



be rightly described as the shallow calling to the deep. If we are offended when eternity calls to men, and men chatter about it as if it were a trifle, so we also ought to be offended when some trifle speaks to them and they look solemn and burdened and anxious over it, and discuss it as if it were a thing of everlasting import. Have you never stood in the midst of the world of fashion and marvelled how it was possible that men and women should care, as those around you seem to care, about the little conventionalities which made the scenery and problems of its life? There is a noble economy of the deepest life. There is a watchful reserve which keeps guard over the powers of profound anxiety and devoted work, and refuses to give them away to any first applicant who comes and asks. Wealth rolls up to the door and says, "Give me your great anxiety"; and you look up and answer, "No, not for you; here is a little half-indifferent desire which is all that you deserve." Popularity comes and says, "Work with all your might for me"; and you reply, "No; you are not of consequence enough for that. Here is a small fragment of energy which you may have, if you want it; but that is all." Even knowledge comes and says, "Give your whole soul to me"; and you must answer once more, "No; great, good, beautiful as you are, you are not worthy of a man's whole soul." But then at last comes One far more majestic than them all—God comes with His supreme demand for goodness and for character, and then you open the doors of your whole nature and bid your holiest and profoundest devotion to come trooping forth. Oh, at least do this. If you are not ready to give your deepest affections, your most utter loyalty to God and Christ, at least refuse to give them to any other master. None but God is worthy of the total offering of man! (*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*)

*Deep calleth unto deep:*—In the grandeur of nature there are awful harmonies. When the storm agitates the ocean below, the heavens above hear the tumult and answer to the clamour. Among the Alps, in the day of tempest, the solemnly silent peaks break through their sacred quiet and speak to each other. The psalmist's meaning, no doubt, was that the wild ocean of troubles without him when he wrote were answered to by the depth of trouble in his soul. Everything around was like an ocean tossed with tempest: his griefs came wave upon wave. And conscience, as with a lightning flash, lit up the abyss of his own inward evil, made him see the darkness of the sins into which he had fallen, and filled him with despondence and foreboding. But, now, note the truth, that where there is one deep it calls to another, and this everywhere. See this in connection with—

**I. THE ETERNAL PURPOSES OF GOD AND THEIR FULFILMENT IN FACT.** What a deep these purposes are: that they should have allowed the intrusion of sin; that there should be a Divine decree of election. But all these are answered to by fact. Sin does exist in the world and sorrow also. And all men are not saved. Why is this, when God is good and omnipotent? Are not both the facts and the decrees mysteries, equal mysteries? All that God has ordained has been done; and this not in virtue of His omnipotence, but consistently with man's free will. The deep of predestination answers to the deep of providence, and both glorify God.

**II. DEEP AFFLICTION.** All are not tried alike. Some have little, others much of trial. You that have much, remember the depth of the Divine faithfulness. In proportion to your tribulations shall be your consolations. Shallow sorrows receive but shallow graces; but if you have deep afflictions, you shall obtain deeper proofs of the faithfulness of God. And great depths of trial bring with them great depths of promises. When the Lord sets His servants to do extraordinary work He always gives them extraordinary strength.

**III. HUMAN WRETCHEDNESS PARALLELED BY DIVINE GRACE.** Never for a moment attempt to make out the abyss of the fall to be less deep than it is—it is bottomless. The miseries of mankind cannot be exaggerated. But there is a deep which answers to the deep of human ruin, and it is the deep of Divine grace.

**IV. THE DEPTH OF DIVINE LOVE TO THE SAINTS CALLS FOR A DEEP OF CONSECRATION IN THEIR HEARTS.** He loved you from the beginning. Think what you have thence received. The love of God which has been manifested in you is a very heaven of love. Depths of the Saviour's grief, ye call to depths of spiritual repentance. The agonies of Christ call us to the slaughter of our sins. As for poor sinners, if God saved me, how I ought to lay out my life to try and save them.

**V. A DEPTH OF DIVINE FORBEARANCE ANSWERS TO ANOTHER DEEP, A DEEP OF IMMEASURABLE AND NEVER-ENDING WEALTH IN THE WORLD TO COME.** The Divine forbearance is certainly very wonderful. Here is a reeking Sodom in the heart of a Christian city. It is a very great mystery that God permits the ungodly to go on as they do. What insults

blasphemous perpetrated upon God. But if that forbearance be despised, then as surely as He has shown so great deep thereof, so will He show an equal deep of justice. The deeps of sin are already challenging the deeps of that justice. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" VI. THE BLESSED DEEP OF HOLY HAPPINESS FOR THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN—this calls for our deep joy and thankfulness now. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *De profundis clamavi*:—I. THE FORCE OF THE IMAGE WHICH IS HERE EMPLOYED. In Jonah we have almost the same words (chap. xi.). There is nothing that moves with such mighty, majestic sweep as the ocean. But the sea is pitiless. The waves succeed each other with a certain measured, harmonious motion. It is the music of destruction. Unhasting, unrelenting, they surge on. The strongest things that man can build are tossed as waifs on their crests or flung as wrecks on the strand. Again, the ocean is profoundly melancholy and restless, yet it aims at and accomplishes nothing, thus adding to the aptness of this image of calamity of which David tells. II. Let us try to ESTIMATE THE EXPERIENCE WHICH THE IMAGE PORTRAYS. 1. There are two spheres of pain. The one comprehends the common experience of mankind. God loves not monotony, and there is none so sad as a monotony, because a satiety, of joy. And hence God has ordained that every life should be chequered. The play of the sunlight and the shadows makes on the whole, for most, a tolerably happy experience of life. Indeed joy and sorrow are very relative terms. "Make up your mind," says Mr. Carlyle, "that you deserve to be hanged, and it will be a happiness only to be shot." Very small pleasures to some are intense joys to others. 2. We mean something quite different from this when we speak of calamity, the anguish through which a soul may be called to pass, and the despair in which it may be lost. Few pass far along the path of life without learning how sorrows differ from calamities; without having to breast a shock which threatens the whole framework of their fortunes. But there are those whose sadder lot it is, like young David, to know little else. Storm after storm, rising and raging with brief intervals of sunlight, till the strength is exhausted, and hope even is ready to expire. It is this "wave upon wave" which is so exhausting. One shock we can breast and master, and if it leave us drenched and shivering, no matter; the sunlight comes, and in the haven the sense of dangers faced and conquered makes the heart throb, and the eyes flash with a proud and joyful fire. You say—Never was man so tried! Well, be it so. You are here, the living, to pray and to praise; here with life, God, and an eternal future. "Why should a living man complain," when he has God, and a future which transcends an archangel's destiny, and out-soars the most daring dreams? David was not so faithless. Hardly had the moan crossed his lips, when it was drowned in a burst of glorious joy. "Watchman, what of the night?" The night is far spent, the day is at hand; the golden flush is already stealing up in the eastern sky. Cease thy moan, faint heart; tune thy lips to praise. See beyond the sullen tempest and the moaning sea a band of golden light in the far distance. A sure pilot steers thy storm-tossed vessel, and He will not leave the helm till He has landed thee on that blessed shore. (J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.)

Ver. 8. Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me.—*The changes of life and their comforts in God*.—Psalms xlii. and xliii. have so close a connection that they must be regarded as one. From external and internal evidence, they belong to David, and to that part of his life when he was fleeing from the face of Absalom his son. It was the Gethsemane of David, and in and up through his heart was throbbing the spiritual life of the Lord Jesus. It is wonderful when we open these ancient books to find the identity of human life. We feel the beatings of the same heart and see the tears which are common to us all. I. THERE MUST BE CHANGES IN EVERY TRUE LIFE. There is day and there is night, the most opposed conditions. See this especially in the life of our Lord. And these changes are according to a fixed law. II. TO SUIT THESE CHANGES IN LIFE THERE ARE DIVINE PROVISIONS. In the day God commands His lovingkindness—His manifold kind providences and grace, and in the night "His song"—the deep, inward realization of His love. III. THERE IS A CONSTANT DUTY ON OUR PART AMID ALL—to pray—"My prayer unto the God of my life. (John Ker, D.D.) *God's carriage unto David, and David's carriage again unto God*:—I. THE CARRIAGE OF GOD TO DAVID. 1. The nature of it. (1) Lovingkindness. There is a common and ordinary kindness which God shows to all sorts of men, upon whom He causes His sun to shine

and His rain to fall: but He is peculiar in His favours towards His people, and bears special lovingkindness to them of all others besides (Ps. xxv. 10). Now, this peculiar lovingkindness is that which David here speaks of (Eph. i. 4, 5). This is the kindness and love of God our Saviour, which does in time appear unto us, as it is (Tit. iii. 4). And all other kindnesses besides flow from this first kindness to us, whether spiritual or temporal; this is the common and general spring and fountain and source of all the rest. David in his present condition of distress was now in the depths; "deep calleth unto deep," etc. But yet he does promise to himself an experience of God's favour: "Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness," etc.; that is, He will do somewhat which may help me in this my affliction, as a fruit of His lovingkindness towards me. We should be careful to have good thoughts of God in the worst conditions that can happen unto us, and be well persuaded of His favour towards us, as well as we can; not to say, when any evil befalls us, it will always be thus, it will never be otherwise. No, but there will a change come, when God sees fitting and most expedient for us. God hath a spring of lovingkindness in Him, and this it will stream itself forth in answerable expressions from Him, and that suitable to our occasions, and the conditions in which we are. If we be such as belong to Him, we may assure ourselves of so much from Him, and He will not be wanting to us in it; He never fails those that wait upon Him. (2) By "His song" we may understand those comfortable expressions of God's lovingkindness to David's soul which caused him even to sing for joy (Ps. xxxii. 7; Acts xvi. 25). It is a thing which cannot be expressed, the great comfort which the people of God find and feel oftentimes from Him at such times as the world looks upon them as in a miserable condition, while He does secretly whisper to their souls many sweet and gracious intimations. (a) His acceptance of their persons, and of that favour in which they are with Him (Dan. ix. 23). (b) His observations of their condition and the affliction under which they are; He does hint, also, that unto them (Exod. iii. 7). (c) Hope of freedom and deliverance. 2. The conveyance of it. (1) While it is said here that God will command His lovingkindness, there are divers things which are implied in this expression; but that which seems principally to be intended is, the efficacy of it; He will command it, therefore it shall take effect. (2) The second is, "Shall be with me"; which does denote the promptness and readiness of it at hand: When trouble is near to afflict, comfort shall then be near to support, and to uphold against trouble (Ps. xli. 1). Because God Himself is with us, therefore His songs shall be with us also, as coming from Him. 3. The time and season. "In the daytime, and in the night." These two divide our whole time, day and night, and they do both of them still tender us somewhat of God's goodness; His lovingkindness in the daytime; His song in the night; the one as the time for the performance, the other as the time for considering and meditating upon it. (1) The businesses of the day are commonly of two sorts, our employments and our refreshments, and in either of these do we partake of the lovingkindness of the Lord. (a) First, in our employments, by way of assistance, as He does enable us to the performance of them; and by way of success, as He does give a blessing and efficacy to them. (b) So likewise as to our refreshments, it is He which puts a comfort into them, without which they could not be so refreshing and comfortable unto us. (2) The night is a time of horror and dreadfulness and fear; yea, but then have the servants of God His songs with them; and He refreshes them with gracious intimations when they lie awake in the night. Look, as that is the time wherein conscience is most stirring, so then, also, are there sweetest impartments and communications of the comforts of God to those also who have communion with Him. II. THE CARRIAGE OF DAVID TO GOD. "My prayer unto the God of my life." 1. A duty. David knows that God will do thus and thus for him, that "He will command His lovingkindness," etc., but yet he will not neglect prayer notwithstanding, but makes use of that as a means which God hath sanctified for the obtaining of favour from Him. God (says he) will do this and this for me, but I will pray to Him for the accomplishment of it. 2. A privilege. David speaks of it here triumphantly, as he did of all the rest, and mentions it as a great relief to him in his present distress. There are two ways in respect whereof prayer is very comfortable, and a very great advantage to God's servants, which make conscience of it: first, in the act and performance; and, secondly, in the issue and effect. (Thomas Horton, D.D.) *Blessings by day, songs in the night*:—I. LARGE ANTICIPATIONS. 1. Night and day should exhibit nothing but seasons for songs. In the best condition there

is something over which we may murmur; in the worst something over which we may be thankful. Religion always ministers to hope. 2. Amid outward trials the Christian may calculate on inward peace. (1) Because of the "lovingkindness" of God. God commands this to rest on the faithful. There is no authority to countermand His decree. (2) Because He is the "God of our life." (3) Because God has promised to bless. (4) Because personal experience proves that in the past there have been marvellous interventions of God. The remembrance of God's mercies strengthens faith. "I will remember thee from the land of Jordan." II. DETERMINED DEDICATION. 1. To the duty of praise. This is great part of the employment of heaven. It should begin here. 2. To renewed prayer. If we are to have true happiness it must be from God, our God, who shall "command" it. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *The song and the prayer:*—Here this great pleader is in deep distress, both in body and soul. He feels overwhelmed and broken down; and he pathetically explains, in jerky sentences, as though he really were in trouble, he explains to God what is the matter. And then all at once there comes a gleam of hope, and he begins instantly, just as if by the invisible touch of another hand and another power outside himself. As that gleam of hope comes, he begins to blend prayer and praise together, and says, "I will sing, sing in the night, in the quiet and silent darkness I will sing." Some time ago, during a monsoon, when we were steaming down the Indian Ocean on our way to Australia, the clouds and atmosphere were thick. Sometimes it rained in torrents, and sometimes there was a kind of indescribable mist that wetted the ship and everything and everybody there. And then all at once, as by the strange magic of nature, there would come an aperture in the cloud; and just on one spot, and not so long as the area of this chapel, it seemed to me, just on one spot the sun would shine on the troubled and turbid waters. And everybody rushed on deck the moment that the sun thus glistened, and they got to the spot where they could see it best. And we all of us, with a kind of strange joy, hailed that gleam, that flash of sunlight on the sea. And it seemed to have taken us at once into a new world. And here in this psalm, amid all the storm, did you hear it pelt, as I read it? Here is David talking to God, and David's soul is disquieted. And then all at once there is a gleam, yea, despite it all, and in the teeth of it all, "And the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." I. And, first of all, let me say that EVERY SOUL HAS ITS OWN PRAYER—"My prayer unto the God of my life." Whoever we are, whatever we may be; it must be, specially, exclusively, intensely my own prayer. No man can ever take the place of my soul, and feel its sins, and its sorrows, and its wants. And so he can never breathe my prayer. It must be "My prayer unto the God of my life." And if we think a minute, we see that it must be so. For prayer springs from different causes; it is uttered in different circumstances and conditions; it is expressed in different words—and must be! The learned and refined man will express his prayer to God in refined and beautiful language. But the unlearned, as Paul calls them, and the unrefined men will express their prayers in quite another way. But we have one common centre; we are every one of us on the main road that leads unto Him who is, and will be for ever, the Light, the Truth, the Way. All along the line that is it: the sinner must pray for himself. Every soul has its own prayer. II. And now, the next thing that I think there is in the text is this: EVERY TRUE PRAYER IS TO "THE GOD OF MY LIFE." Brethren, I am deeply thankful for that beautiful definition of God, "The God of my life." When I went to Mr. Spurgeon's College, the first theological book put in my hand was Hodge's *Outlines of Theology*. There are very many definitions of God there also, but I have forgotten them all. I have not, however, forgotten this, in any change in my life and circumstances: "God of my life." Yes, every step of the way, all along the dark roads, and all along the sunny days, "the God of my life." He is the God of all the mysteries, as well as of all the things that are palpable. The things that you and I cannot explain, for which we find no reason, He is still "the God of my life." Why that father, who is the bread-winner for a wife and several children, at the most critical time in the family's life, why should he be smitten down to death? Why is all this? He is "the God of my life" and of yours also. And I am sure, in the face of every enigma, He is "the God of my life." When Jacob was dying, he wanted to bless the two boys of Joseph. And in doing so he said a most beautiful thing, which is a beautiful description of God. Did you ever dwell on it? "The God which fed me." Now, I like that. "The

God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel that redeemed me, bless the lads." The poetry of that is to me exquisite. But the description of God comes home to my very heart. "The God who has fed me all my life long unto this day," you show you have a God of Providence as well as a God of grace. Do let me say to you, it is to that God, "the God of my life," that the prayer is directed every morning, and at noonday, and at night. He is the God of my life, the God of my joys, the God of my sorrows, the God of my hopes, the God of all my burdens and forgivenesses, the God of the lovingkindness that crystallizes and shines and glitters round the cross. He is the God of an infinite love, of an infinite salvation. (*W. Buff.*)

Ver. 9. I will say unto God my Rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy!—*David's expostulation with God*.—I. THE PREFACE OR INTRODUCTION. "I will say unto God," etc. 1. The terms upon which David addresses himself to God. "My Rock." This was an expression suitable to the condition which David was now in, and the metaphor which he had it set forth by, to wit, of being in the "deep"; he had said, the waves and billows went over him, and now, therefore, does he repair to the Rock. The Lord is pleased still in Scripture to represent Himself to us as most agreeable to our present necessities. If we be sick, He is our health; if we be dead, He is our life; if we be pursued, He is our castle; if we be assaulted, He is our shield; if we be ready to sink under dangers and calamities, He is then our Rock (Ps. xviii. 2; lxxxix. 26; xciv. 22). It is a small booty to us, for God to be a rock, except He be ours, and therefore David adds this to the other. Not only the rock which I have right to, but also the rock which I have proof and trial of in former proceedings. I have made Him my rock by faith, He has made Himself my rock by love. Thus the servants of God, as they go confidently where they have interest, so they go more confidently still there where they have experience (Ps. lvii. 2). 2. His preparation of himself to this address. "I will say." (1) A word of premeditation and advice. David being now to come before God, and to address himself unto Him, does not come to Him hand over head; he cares not how; but he thinks first with himself what he will utter and speak before Him when he shall come into His presence. (2) A word of resolution. David had tried other ways, he had spoken to his own soul already, and that would not do the deed; and now he resolves to go to God Himself, and to fasten his complaints upon Him, or at least to spread them before Him, and to desire His relief of Him in them. And this is what all Christians should resolve on; it is the best course which can be taken. II. THE EXPOSTULATION ITSELF. "Why hast Thou," etc. 1. Look upon this complaint as it refers to God. "Why hast Thou forgotten me?" This may be understood either as such which there was causes and ground for indeed, or else as such which was so only according to David's apprehension. (1) God does sometimes so carry Himself towards His servants as if He had forgotten them, while He suffers them to continue and abide under sundry evils which they fall into. God forgets them that so they may remember themselves. The servants of God in prosperity, and in the enjoyment of all things to their minds, are apt very often to wander and go astray, and to go out of the way; now desertion it brings them in again and reduces them, and recovers them to themselves (Luke xv. 17; 1 Kings viii. 47; Ps. cxix. 67). As God forgets His people that so they may remember themselves, so also sometimes that they may remember Him (Isa. xvii. 10). That they may remember others (Amos, vi. 6). (2) As we may look upon this forgetting as so indeed, so we may look upon it as being so only in David's apprehension, and so signifying thus much unto us, that God's servants are apt to think God forgets them, even then when He is yet mindful of them. From want of due understanding and consideration of the manner of God's dealings. From impatience and too much haste. 2. As it refers to himself. (1) He expostulates about the occasion. "Why go I mourning?" The occasions hereof to God's people are sundry and various: as, (a) their own sins, and the corruptions which do cleave unto them. (b) The sins of others. God's children go mourning for these also. (c) For their own and others' afflictions. (2) He expostulates as to the affection. "Why go I mourning?" that is, Why do I mourn in this excess, as I now perceive myself to do? This is that which the servants of God are oftentimes troubled withal, even the inordinacy and distemper of their affections, when they go beyond their due measure and bounds; not only as it is painful, but as it is sinful. (3) This expostulation hath

reference to the adversaries and opposites of David, "Because of the oppression of the enemy." (*Thomas Horton, D.D.*)

**Vor. 10. As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?**—*The sword of the wicked:—I. THE CARRIAGE, DISPOSITION AND EXPRESSION OF OTHERS TO DAVID.* 1. They were his enemies. God's children will never want such. 2. They reproached him. Their tongues were tipped from hell, and they did but utter that which was in their hearts. But such reproach is grievous. See Gal. iv., how Ishmael persecuted Isaac. 3. The specialty of their reproach was, "They say unto me, Where is thy God?" They touch him in his religion. They did not deny that there was any God, but they upbraid him with his singularity, "Where is thy God?" And this is an ordinary reproach to be cast at a good man in trouble. They seek to shake his faith. So did Satan try our Lord (Matt. iv. 3). 4. And they say out their reproach to his face. They are that impudent. Malice is so, and will always be so. 5. And they say it "daily." They are unwearied: their malice is fed with a spring; it never wants for words. 6. And that which they say is—Where is now thy God? God does at times hide Himself (Isa. xlv. 15; Matt. xxvii. 46). God was never nearer Christ in all His life than then, and yet He thus cries out. But our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3). As in winter the life of a tree is hid in its roots. But God was not gone from David. God was never nearer Moses than when he was sprawling upon the water in that ark they had made for him (Exod. ii. 3). David might have said to them, Where are your eyes? For God was not only in heaven, but in his soul. **II. HOW DID THIS REPROACH AFFECT DAVID?** "As with a sword in my bones." Now, this was so—1. Because it tended to the reproach of God. It disparaged God, and so touched David, who loved God. 2. And it touched upon religion itself. As if it were vain to serve God. It was a base thought to think that God would do no good to them that serve Him. Even the devil does that. 3. This reproach was for the damping of the spirits of all good men. Words affect strangely; they have a strange force with men, especially in such as are weak (Numb. xiii. 32). **III. CONCLUSION.** To make some use of all this—how does hearing God reproached affect us? Is it as a sword in our bones? It should be. That which hath no grief when there is cause of grief is to be accounted but as dead flesh. When God's enemies persecute His people we ought to be stirred. Paul (Acts xiii. 10). And we may learn here how to enlarge the commandments. The swords spoken of here were but words. He is a murderer in God's esteem that wounds another with his tongue (Rom. iii. 13; Prov. xii. 18). (*R. Sibbes.*) "**Where is thy God?**" *How God is known:*—During the prevalence of the disease known as the "Black Death," in the fourteenth century, the people in some of the European cities, attributing the disorder to poison secretly disseminated by Jews, furiously murdered these Israelites, it is said, by thousands, and then built Christian churches and church belfries out of the houses and estates of the slaughtered victims. See, too, the atrocities of the Inquisition, who tormented mankind in the name of God. Also the malignity of the Jews in John ix. toward the blind man cured by our Lord. These and other such facts move two questions—What is our knowledge of God? and, What has such knowledge to do with personal character? We speak of God as if there were a common understanding about Him, which is far from being the case. There are as many impressions of God as there are persons, and no uniformity will be attained by any attempts at definitions, for all these will be modified by our own individuality. Still we are told in Scripture that we ought to know God, and that the people that know Him shall be stroug. But our apprehensions of God's character depends, and was meant to depend, very largely on conditions for which we are ourselves responsible. The text implies this. The mere idea of God—however derived—may be said to be natural, but the conception of the Divine character is compounded of many elements. Christians deem the grand essentials of that character to be wisdom, power, goodness. Find these three in perfect degree and balance in a living person, and He will be the Christian's God—All-wise, Almighty, All-good. But we can only realize these as we possess them in ourselves. If we have no goodness in us we cannot understand goodness. In the measure that we receive God's Spirit shall we know God, and so only. Slavish peoples crouch before a despotic deity. Given the character of the people, and you may know what their gods will be. As to character, God is what we look to as the best goodness embodied in an

unseen person. Even Revelation, in all its many and varied forms, its combined voices and cross lights, will not produce uniformity of conception, for that must depend upon what our minds are. We must long to be better men would we know how good God is. (Bishop Huntington.)

Ver. 11. **Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.**—*David's malady and David's medicine:*—The psalm has a beauty all its own—the beauty of an April morning—full of contrasts and surprises. Extremes meet in a single verse, and are repeated over and over again, brief though the psalm is. The "Kyrie" and the "Gloria" follow each other in quick succession, whilst often there is the "harmony of discord" worthy of a Mendelssohn. I. **LET US EXAMINE THE PATIENT.** That he is far from well there can be no doubt. The whole tenor of his language implies disease, and so distinctly are the symptoms described that we need be at no loss to discover his malady. It is depression. Now, this is—1. An internal disease—it has to do with his soul. Of all diseases, internal ones are the worst, especially when they are spiritual. Outward trouble will not hurt a man much so long as it keeps to the outward. The sailor cares not because the green waves with crested heads curl over and dash against the vessel, shaking it from stem to stern; or because they, rising in their wrath, leap upon the deck, and with wild glee pour off again through the port holes. But his trouble is that of the sailor when from one to another the whisper passes through the ship, "We have sprung a leak." The water in the hold is more dreaded than all the ocean without. Such was the case with David. He could say, "The waters have come into my soul." 2. But notice next that although inward in its nature its effects are to be seen in the countenance. In our text we read that God is the health of our countenance: if, then, His presence be wanting the countenance suffers. It is so with the body: inward disease will show itself on the countenance. And so it is with inward care. The only doctor that some Christians need is their God, and the only medicine they require is hope. Great prostration is one of the signs of this disease. 3. Another sign is that of burning thirst. You get that in the first and second verses. This disease may arise from many different causes. Then there is conformity to the world, that condition so rampant in the Church of our day. II. **LET US NOW CAREFULLY ANALYZE THE MEDICINE PRESCRIBED.** (A. G. Brown.) *The good man's peace:*—I. **THERE IS SUCH A PEACE.** God's people ordinarily possess it. Hence, David asks, "Why art thou cast down?" etc. It was not usual for him to be thus disquieted. For—1. The Father is engaged to give peace unto them. 2. The Son also. 3. The Holy Ghost likewise. For this is He sent as the Comforter. And He is this both in heaven above and in our own bosoms (1 John i. 2; John xiv. 16). II. **BUT EXPERIENCE SEEMS TO CONTRADICT all this,** for many of God's people have not peace, but disquietude. But, remember, general rules have always some exceptions, and in this matter note—1. There is a fundamental peace which God's people have, and there is an additional peace: the first arises from their justification, the second from their sense of it. 2. And there is a great difference between peace, comfort and joy. A man may have peace that hath no comfort, and comfort but no joy. One is beyond the other. 3. There is a peace which lies in opposition to what one hath been, and a peace that is in opposition to what one would be. I may be grateful that I am not that sinner I was, but I may be disquieted that I yet am not what I would be. 4. There may be a secret, dormant peace, where there is not an awakened and apparent peace. This latter may be a while absent, but the former is not. III. **CONCLUSION.** 1. Then behold what a blessed condition God's saints are in. This truth appeals to the ungodly. It did so once to a great man in Germany, that it was the beginning of his conversion. He was a papist, a profane person; and coming occasionally to hear Peter Martyr preach, he heard him say, "When ye see men at a distance skipping, leaping and dancing, ye think the men are mad; but when ye draw near to them, hear what music they have, then ye do not wonder; but ye rather wonder at yourselves that ye should wonder at them. So, when you look upon the godly at a distance, and see them running after ordinances, and frequenting the means and rejoicing in the ways of God, you think, and ye say, they are mad; but if you draw near to a godly course, and perceive what music these people have within, you say not they are mad, but you rather wonder at yourselves, that you should wonder at

thom." This saying struck the nobleman and led him to look to his condition and to turn to God. Yes, the saints have music within, peace and quiet within, as a rule, though here and there there may be exceptions. 2. But some are in doubt whether their peace be counterfeit. There is such a false peace (Deut. xxiv. 19). 3. But there is a true peace given of the Holy Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc. And thus it may be known. 4. But one says, "I never had this blessed peace and have it not now. What am I to do?" Meditate much upon the fullness of satisfaction made by the death of Christ. Then go to Christ Himself, seeking peace not merely for the comfort of it, but as a help to your grace: and take His promise along with you. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *True peace may be interrupted*:—See in text the words, "cast down," "disquieted"; three times are they repeated. And such is the frequent experience of good men. In considering this note—I. **HOW FAR THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF SAINTS MAY REACH.** They may reach—1. To the refusing of the word of consolation brought to you—"My soul refuseth to be comforted." 2. To the consequent affliction and distress of the body (Ps. cii. 4, 5, 6, 9; Jer. xx. 7-9). II. **WHY DOES GOD PERMIT THIS?** It is always for His people's good. 1. So only will men come to God. So long as they find fullness in creatures they will not come (1 Tim. iv. 5; 1 Sam. xxx. 6). 2. To make us value peace and quietness of soul. 3. God, as a tender Father, would have all the love of His children, and so removes what intercepts that love, as our earthly comforts often do. 4. Our comforts are sent to bind us to God and to wean us from the world, but sometimes we need to be weaned from these weaners that we may grow up unto more perfection. 5. To prevent over-confidence: the soul grows wanton and secure under its comforts, and then these need to be withdrawn. 6. As a wise and honest chirurgeon, though he desire his patient to be soon cured, yet if he see the plaister doth not lie right, he takes it off again: so doth Christ do if He see that the comforts of His people are not laid rightly. Hence a poor soul may ere long be much discouraged, though for the present full of comfort. He will, if he lay his comfort upon internal blessings and measure God's love by them. III. **BUT HOW CAN ALL THESE DISCOURAGEMENTS STAND WITH GRACE?** Can a man be thus to and fro in his comfort in Christ and yet be holy? Yes, for though there be evil in this, yet there is grace withal. Though they be much cast down, they still mourn after God. They long for His presence. But let such cast-down ones take heed—1. Not to forget God. 2. Not so to seek comfort that you lose it yet more: there is such a thing as more haste and worse speed. Some seek comfort in a use of reason, and try to argue themselves into comfort. Others give up their common duty and neglect their proper callings, thinking that in their distress here is nothing to be done but prayer. But thus they lay themselves open to yet more temptations. 3. Not so to strain after some outward comfort that you lose that which is inward. I read of Francis Spira that, having denied the truth in order to get a good estate for his wife and children, he could no longer bear the sight of them, his conscience being in such horror of what he had done. They had been his comforts before, but now to see them was to be filled with misery. What comfort had Judas in his thirty pieces of silver? God forbid that we should drink the blood of our own peace and comfort. IV. **REMEDIES FOR OUR DISCOURAGEMENTS.** 1. Do now what you would if now you were to be justified. 2. Find out why God has left you: if for some sin, be humbled for it. 3. Read much in God's Word, and so fill your mind with thoughts of Christ and with the blessed promises of God. 3. When God restores comforts to you, take care to understand them: if you would be rid of Satan coming into your quarters, fall you upon him. Attack him and do him all the mischief you can: put your comforts into Christ's hand and use them for His. (*Ibid.*) *The soul's conflict with itself*:—I. **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.** 1. Grief gathered to a head will not be quieted at the first. What bustling there is here before David can get the victory over his own heart. 2. A gracious and living soul is most sensible of the want of spiritual means. 3. A godly soul, by reason of the grace given it, knows when it is well with it and when it is ill, when a good day and when a bad. Now, our text tells us of David's state wherein he was, and of his carriage in that state. He was much cast down, but he bids himself trust in God. Now, God's people are often cast down. II. **THE DISCOURAGEMENTS WHICH COME TO GOD'S PEOPLE FROM WITHOUT.** 1. God Himself. He sometimes hides His face from them (Matt. xxvii. 46). It is with the godly in this case as with vapours drawn up by the sun, which, when the extracting force of the sun leaves them, fall down



again to the earth. So when the soul raised up by the beams of God's countenance is left of God, it presently begins to sink. 2. By Satan. He is all for this; being disquieted himself, he would disquiet others. 3. By Satan's instruments and servants. Hear them (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). 4. By ourselves. There is a seminary of causes of discouragement within us. Our flesh is one of them.

**III. THOSE THAT ARE FROM WITHIN.** There is cause oft in the body of those in whom a melancholy temper prevaileth. But in the soul, too, there are causes of discouragement. 1. Want of knowledge in the understanding. 2. Forgetfulness (Heb. xii. 5). 3. Underrating our comforts (Job xv. 11). 4. A childish kind of peevishness. Abraham (Gen. xv. 2; Jonah iv. 9; Jer. xxxi. 15). 5. False reasoning and error in our discourse. Many imagine their failings to be fallings, and their fallings to be fallings away. 6. Proceeding by a false method and order in judging of their estate. They will begin with election, which is not the first, but the highest step of the ladder. God descends down unto us from election to calling, and so to sanctification: we must ascend to Him, beginning where He ends. 7. Seeking for their comfort too much in sanctification, neglecting justification, relying too much upon their own performances. This is a natural kind of popery in men. St. Paul was of another mind (Phil. iii. 8, 9). Still, though the main pillar of our comfort be in the free forgiveness of our sins, yet, if there be a neglect in growing in holiness, the soul will never be soundly quiet. Sin ever raises doubts and fears. 8. The neglect of keeping a clear conscience. 9. Ignorance of Christian liberty, by unnecessary scruples and doubts. 10. Want of employment. An unemployed life is a burden to itself. 11. Omission of duties and offices of love to them to whom they are due. 12. Want of firm resolution in good things. Halting is a deformed and troublesome gesture, and halting in religion is full of disquiet (1 Kings xviii. 21). God will not speak peace to a staggering spirit that hath always its religion and its way to choose.

**IV. BUT THERE ARE POSITIVE CAUSES AS WELL AS NEGATIVE ONES.** 1. When men lay up their comfort too much on outward things. These are ever changing, and to build our hopes upon them is to build castles in the air. Micah is right (Mic. ii. 10). 2. When we depend too much upon the opinions of other men. Men that seek themselves too much abroad find themselves disquieted at home. 3. When we look too much and too long upon the ill in ourselves and abroad. Now, learn from all this not to be too hasty in censuring others when they are cast down, for there are so many things which cast men down; and to prepare our hearts for trouble, so that when it comes we be not cast down.

**V. CASTING DOWN OURSELVES CAUSES MANY EVILS.** 1. It indisposes a man to all good duties. 2. It is a great wrong to God Himself. 3. It makes a man forgetful of all his former blessings, and—4. Unfit to receive mercies. Till the Spirit of God meekens the soul, say what you will, it minds nothing. 5. It keeps off beginners from coming in. Hence, we should all labour after a calmed spirit.

**VI. REMEDIES.** 1. To do, as here, cite the soul before itself, and, as it were, to reason the case. God hath set up a court in man's heart, the court of conscience, and its prejudging will prevent future judging. But evil men love not this court; they are afraid of it (1 Kings xxii. 16; Acts xxiv. 25). Self-love, indolence, pride, are all against it. 2. And we must not merely cite the soul before itself; but it must be pressed to give an account, and if that will not help, then speak to Jesus Christ by prayer, that as He stilled the waves, so He would quiet our hearts. 3. A godly man can cast a restraint upon himself, as David here does. There is an art in bearing troubles as in bearing burdens, and we should seek to learn it. 4. We see here again that a godly man can make good use of privacy. When he is forced to be alone he can talk with his God and himself. The wicked dread being alone. Illustration—Charles IX. of France after the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day. 5. God hath made every man a governor over himself. (*R. Sibbes.*) *Unfitting dejection.*—Now, dejection is so—1. **WHEN THE SOUL IS TROUBLED FOR THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE VEXED FOR.** As Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 1, 2). II. **WHEN IT SPRINGS FROM SELF-LOVE.**

**III. WHEN WE TROUBLE OURSELVES, THOUGH NOT WITHOUT CAUSE, YET WITHOUT BOUNDS.** We may know when our dejection is excessive. 1. When it hinders us from holy duties. It was not thus with our Lord (John xix. 28, 27; Luke xxiii. 42). 2. When we forget the grounds of comfort that are given us. 3. When it inclines the soul to evil. Therefore inquire—IV. **WHAT IS THE SWEET AND HOLY TEMPER OF SOUL THAT WE SHOULD SEEK FOR?** 1. The soul must be raised to a right but yet a bounded grief. And to this end we should look at the state of the soul in itself and on what terms it is with God (Lev. xvi. 29). And we should

look outside of ourselves to note the causes of grief that are there (Jer. ix. 1). 2. But our grief must be kept within bounds, and it is so, when it is ready to meet God at every turn in obedience and communion; and when reason approves our grief, and when our grief moves us to all duties of love towards others. Our concern for God's house cannot be excessive (Ps. lxxix. 9; cxix. 39; Isa. lix. 19; Exod. xxxii. 19). See, then, the life of a poor Christian in this world. He is in great danger if he be not troubled at all, and, when troubled, lest he be overtroubled. Let him ask the Holy Spirit's help (John xi. 13). (*Ibid.*) *Means not to be overcharged with sorrow*:—1. Take heed of building on unfounded confidence of happiness, which makes us when changes come unacquainted with them and unexpected and unprepared. We gain help by thinking beforehand of what may come (John xvi. 33). Still, we are not to imagine troubles. 2. Love not overmuch anything in this world lest when we have to give it up we be broken-hearted. The way to prevent this is given in Col. iii. 1, 5. 3. Take care when trouble comes not to mingle our passions with it. Our hearts are deceitful. Who would have thought that Moses would have murmured, David murdered (2 Sam. xii. 9), Peter denied our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 72)? But trouble and temptation draw forth hidden evils. Therefore let us watch over our own souls and examine them continually. Let us not yield to passion; do we not belong to God? Our passions are to serve, not rule us. Man's curse was to be a servant of servants (Gen. ix. 25). Exercise strong self-denial. The gate, the entrance of religion is narrow, and we must strip ourselves of self before we can enter. (*Ibid.*) *A sick soul*:—I. THE DISEASE. 1. He is depressed. Aspiration has grown faint. We all know these heavier moments, when the spring seems to go out of our being, and we feel as though the tripping step will never return. We feel prematurely old. 2. He is not merely burdened, he is possessed by a feverish uncertainty. He can no longer look at things calmly and therefore truly, and everything appears to him in monstrous and distorted guise. There is no more fatal minister in human life than the disquieted eye. So long as the eye can gaze at things with cool and quiet vision we see things in their true perspective and proportion. But when the eye is shaken into restlessness its focus is perverted, and everything is seen awry. But the disquieted soul is not only possessed of a restless eye, it is the possessor of a nerveless hand. II. THE REMEDY. 1. The first step in the removal of this spiritual sickness is a realization of the personal relationship of the soul to God. Once postulate God, and all things come within the plane of the credible. 2. The second essential secret of recovery is to believe in the possibility of God's health being transmitted to us. There is a striking difference between verse five and verse eleven. In the former verse the psalmist speaks of praising God "for the health of His countenance," and in verse eleven he speaks of praising God, "who is the health of my countenance." The health of the one can be transmitted to the other. We more frequently speak of the contagion of disease. Perhaps when we know a little more we shall speak with equal assurance of the contagion of health. If evil communications corrupt good manners, holy communications refine them. One of the secrets of obtaining a healthy spiritual life is to obtain the fellowship of saintly people. But the transcendently important clue is to obtain the friendship of God. God's holiness is contagious; to commune with Him is to become a partaker of the Divine nature. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Religious depression*:—I. CAUSES. 1. Physical weakness. 2. A constitutional tendency to look on the darker side of things. 3. The misapprehension of certain main spiritual truths, such as the character of God, conversion, etc. II. TREATMENT OF THE DISEASE. 1. If physical weakness be the secret of our spiritual depression, then the only effectual cure is to aim at strengthening that which is really weak, namely, the bodily health; and not to weaken the body still more by fretting over a lowness of spirits which results from our feeble physical condition almost as inevitably as loss of light follows from the setting of the sun. 2. If, again, it is a constitutional tendency to look on the dark side of things generally, that has to answer for the gloomy hue of our religion, the obvious remedy is to look on the brighter aspect. 3. Or if, by unhappy training, or through the bias of temperament, we have come to entertain such views of God, and of spiritual things, as are directly causative of religious despondency, then we must do our best to remedy the evil by acquiring right views. Above all, we must sedulously and prayerfully cherish right views of God, whom we dishonour by regarding as a captious taskmaster—Him whose nature, and whose name, is Love! (*T. P. Lockyer, B.A.*) *Causes and cure of melancholy*:—I. THE CAUSES

OF RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY. 1. Sometimes our compassionate Father, who in mercy visits us so often with external afflictions, is pleased, for the same benevolent reasons, to make us suffer internal sorrows. As when the sun is eclipsed, all nature appears to mourn, so everything is gloomy to the believer when anything interposes between his soul and the gracious countenance of his God. 2. Sometimes Satan is permitted to disquiet and distress the children of God. 3. With Satan, wicked men often concur to depress and cast down the pious. 4. But the great causes of our dejections and melancholy are to be found in ourselves.

(1) From the temperament of the body (2) From ignorance and error. (3) From sin. II. WHY, LIKE THE PSALMIST, WE SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO RISE FROM THIS STATE. Your duty to God, as well as your own happiness, requires this. How imperfectly are all the Christian duties performed by you, when you are thus "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow": how unfitly do you worship Him who loves a cheerful and a thankful giver? III. THE MEANS WHEREBY WE MAY AGAIN OBTAIN PEACE, COMFORT, AND A CALM TRUST IN GOD. 1. Imitate the psalmist here:

instead of yielding to a vague grief, cite your soul; inquire of it the particular cause of your sorrow: different remedies will be requisite, according to the different sources of your distress: and be careful that you trifle not with God, and your comfort, and your salvation, while you inquire of your soul, "why art thou cast down?" 2. Be careful to understand the Gospel-scheme of salvation; especially the nature, the terms, the intent of the covenant of grace. 3. Study also the promises of God; view them in their variety, their extent, their application to you. 4. In your devotions, be much employed in praise and thanksgiving, instead of principally occupying yourselves with lamentations. If you cannot do this with all the joy that you would, do it as well as you can. 5. Be not unacquainted with your own hearts; examine them, to see the marks of conversion, and to "make your calling sure" to yourselves. 6. But do not confine yourselves to this self-examination; be also engaged in active duties. The growing and fruitful Christian will be a comfortable one; a degree of peace and satisfaction will follow every good action; and your graces, acquiring maturity, will shine by their own light. (H. Kollock, D.D.) *The causes and cure of spiritual distress*:—I. THE PSALMIST'S PRESENT CONDITION OR STATE OF MIND. 1. Good men are often cast down; their souls are often disquieted in them, from want, as they imagine, of actual communion with God in duty, or a sense of His gracious presence with them; and if this complaint were as well founded as it is a common and heavy complaint, it would be a just cause, no doubt, of great disquiet. But how are we to judge of our communion with God in duty? (1) We are to judge by an habitual sense of the Divinity upon our minds, and the devout reverential impressions we feel from His presence with us, and our accountableness to Him. (2) We are to judge of communion with God in duty, from the sense we have of our need of daily supplies and communications from His fulness and all-sufficiency. (3) It will be found no unsatisfying evidence of God's gracious presence with us in duty if we are enabled to deal fairly with our own hearts. 2. The suggestions of Satan assail the minds of good men. But how are we to distinguish such suggestions as may be properly ascribed to the grand enemy, and those that arise from the unsubdued corruption and lusts of our own minds? We are to distinguish by the welcome they meet with, and the free quarters we allow them, on the one hand; or by the pain and distress they give us, on the other, and by our opposition to them, and our endeavours to dismiss them. It is the consent of the will alone that constitutes the moral turpitude of every emotion or action; and while it is our daily struggle to withhold this, and we are, upon the whole, through Divine grace, enabled to withhold it, we have nothing to fear from all the efforts of Satanical machinations to taint and corrupt our affections. And here the disquieted soul may rest. 3. Not a few have been disquieted and cast down from false representations and wrong conceptions of the Divine decrees; as if thereby a certain number were under a sentence of reprobation, and for ever excluded from the Divine mercy. But this ground of disquiet is most unreasonable, and most dishonourable to God. 4. Another cause of much disquietude arises from imperfect or dark views of the ground of our acceptance with God. A cause of disquietude to which bad men are entire strangers, unless under the immediate horror of momentary convictions. II. THE PSALMIST'S EXPOSTULATION WITH HIMSELF. "Why art thou cast down?" etc. God doth not leave His people to lie under their spiritual distresses, to pore over them, and sink under them. He leads them home to prove their hearts; he leads them to their hope. 1. He leads

them to prove their spirit, and to observe what is amiss about them: to mark this passion as too violent; that affection as wrong directed; that here they have lost the guard over themselves, and spoke unadvisedly with their tongue, and have been led into indiscretions, into excesses; that there their attachment to the world, or worldly connections, have been too strong, and occupied their time and attention too much. 2. He leads them to their hope—to "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." It is from this Sun of Righteousness that the first dawn of hope opens upon the trembling, awakened sinner, and, ready to sink under a load of guilt, supports him. And when believers themselves fall, and thereby wound their peace and lose sight of all their evidences, they have no other refuge. III. THE PSALMIST'S SUPPORT AMIDST ALL HIS DISTRESS. "Still hope in God," etc. (T. Gordon.) *Downheartedness*:—I. NOTHING IS SO BAD AS A CONTINUED AND ALLOWED DOWNHEARTEDNESS. 1. It magnifies troubles. 2. It drags at and prevents work. 3. It shadows blessings, making the hard things in life prominent rather than the ameliorating things. 4. It bereaves of God and shadows the promises. II. THERE ARE MANY CAUSES FOR DOWNHEARTEDNESS IN THIS STRANGE AND DISCIPLINARY WORLD. 1. Exile. 2. Overstrain of work. 3. Hard environment. III. HOW CAN ONE DEFEAT DOWNHEARTEDNESS AND LIFT INTO AND KEEP HIMSELF IN CHEER? 1. By recognition of the fact that downheartedness is worst for us. A man ought to esteem it as bad for the soul as some corrupting contagion is for the body. 2. By service for others. That is one trouble with downheartedness—it emphasizes self. And a good, and frequently quick, cure for it is the determined emphasizing on our part of other selves, thus causing, somewhat at least, a forgetfulness of the morbid self. 3. I pray you also, when you are downhearted, make your work a sacrament. By strong and prayerful volition put yourself at the daily duty; do it even more painstakingly than ever, even though you feel so little like it. A high reactive feeling of victory will have large share in scattering your darkness. 4. Last and chiefest, turn to God. Follow the example of the psalmist here. (W. Hoyt, D.D.) *Unfailing hope*:—I. THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH THE PSALMIST WAS AND CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES ARE. II. THE DESIRABLENESS OF THE INVESTIGATION WHICH THE PSALMIST INSTITUTED. 1. It is very often for a want of asking the question that you are in that state at all. Many men allow partly imaginary trials to creep into their souls, that scarcely have a palpable existence if they were only inquired into, and yet when once they are seen they are watched over, and they grow until they expand to such an extent that they seem to fill the man's whole spirit and all around him; whereas if they were just looked at in the face in the light of Divine presence and in the glory that beams from another world, they would vanish in a moment like mists before the rising sun; the man's trouble would be turned into triumph, and his saddest sorrows into sweetest song. Let the inquiry be made, for it is for lack of the inquiry very often that the soul is cast down within us, and is disquieted in all it has to pass through. 2. The inquiry should be made because generally, if not entirely, it would be found that in the Divine dealings there really was no cause whatever for the soul to be cast down at all. The very form of the question implies that. "Why art thou cast down?" Really, the psalmist does not know of any reason why it should be, and he speaks to his soul like another man, of whom he was surprised and almost ashamed. 3. Another reason why the question should be asked is because very often the answer to it will be found in the soul itself. "You ask me why I am cast down within you. Remember all the accumulation of worldliness and care and greed and sinful indulgence that you have heaped up upon me till I have been buried under it and could not move." III. THE COUNSEL THE PSALMIST ADDRESSES TO HIS SOUL. "Hope thou in God." Look at Martin Luther when his enemies are like raging lions gathered round him, and he is cast into prison and all things look dark and threatening, and a common soul might be disquieted and cast down. "No," he says, "let us sing the 46th psalm, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help; therefore will not we fear though the mountains be removed.'" His soul is not cast down. He hopes in God. What say you—the stream is dried up? Well, in all probability it is in mercy it has, for if that had continued you had never gone to the fountain. Hope thou in God, for if you can say, "God is my salvation," with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. What do you say—your strength is exhausted and you are feeble and have no power left? Then hope thou in God, for they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. (J. P. Chown.) *Trust in God our best support in all our troubles and*

*afflictions*.—I. WE HAVE FIRM GROUNDS FOR OUR TRUST IN GOD FROM THOSE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD WHICH ENABLE AND DISPOSE HIM TO HELP US. When we place our trust in God we run no risks, because there is nothing which infinite power cannot accomplish; nothing fit and expedient for us which infinite goodness is not disposed to grant; no promises of help can have been made us by a God of truth and holiness which will not be exactly and punctually fulfilled. II. HAVE AN EYE TO THE EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO HAVE THUS PLACED THEIR TRUST IN GOD, AND HAVE FOUND HELP IN THE TIME OF NEED. Wonderful is that instance of an unshaken confidence in God, which is displayed for our instruction, and recorded for our imitation, in the history of the sufferings and of the patience of Job. III. ENDEAVOUR TO STRENGTHEN OUR RELIANCE ON GOD FROM THE EXPERIENCE WE OURSELVES HAVE HAD OF HIS FORMER LOVINGKINDNESS TOWARDS US. To God we owe our being, and those blessings which we either now do, or ever did, enjoy. There are many calamities incident to men which we have, through the goodness of God, escaped. He who hath delivered us from so great dangers, and doth deliver, in Him we may safely trust, that He will yet deliver us. Is the Lord's hand, that has been so often stretched forth for our help, since shortened, that it can no longer save? Or is His ear, that has been so often opened to our prayers, grown heavy, that it can no more hear? (*Bishop Smalridge*.) "*My God*":—Whatever God may be, it is no advantage to me if He is not my God. Another man's health will not make me well. Another man's wealth will not make me rich. Another man's knowledge will not make me wise. Another man's station will not make me dignified. The leaving out of one word from the will may ruin a man's hopes and blast all his expectations. The want of this one word "*My*" is the sinner's loss of heaven, and the dagger that smites him into the second death. That pronoun *my* is just worth as much to the soul as God and heaven; because without it you can't have them. That little word is the private cabinet in which all our comfort for time and for eternity is locked up. It is the one string upon which all our joys are hung. (*R. Berry*.)

### PSALM XLIII.

VERS. 1-5. *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause.—The soul's double appeal*.—I. AN APPEAL TO GOD. 1. For Divine vindication. 2. For Divine deliverance. 3. For Divine information. 4. For Divine guidance. II. AN APPEAL TO SELF. He was conscious of—1. The personality of his soul. 2. The sorrow of his soul. 3. The interests of his soul. (*Homilist*.) *In exile*.—I. THE EXILE'S PRAYER. 1. For judgment against the accusations of an ungodly nation. Nothing uncommon for the Christian to be the target of wrong charges. 2. For deliverance from the deceitful and unjust man. 3. For light and truth to lead him back to Zion. II. THE EXILE'S PROMISE. 1. To go to the altar, *i. e.* for sacrifice, consecration, worship. 2. To seize the harp for thanksgiving and praise. Religious services should be glad some; those in the home as well as those in the sanctuary. Our hearts too often like "muffled drums beating funeral marches," rather than like well-tuned harps sending forth strains of sweetest harmony and gladdest adoration, etc. III. THE EXILE'S SOLILOQUY. 1. A question. 2. A response. "Cast down!"—"Hope." "Disquieted!"—"Praise." "Praise Him who is the health," the beauty, the ruddy glow, the youth, "of thy countenance, and thy God." (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. *Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? The secret of sadness*.—I. IS IT BECAUSE I AM NOT REALLY FIGHTING AGAINST HIM? Am I doing my best, or only allowing religion to be a sentiment, a dream, and not a real stern battle? II. IS IT BECAUSE I AM ONLY FIGHTING A PART OF THE ENEMY? Prince Rupert, at the battles of Edgehill and Marston Moor, was utterly defeated because he concentrated all his strength on one wing of the enemy, heedless of the other. So is it often with Christians. III. IS IT BECAUSE I AM FIGHTING TOO EXCLUSIVELY MY OWN BATTLE? When cholera threatens, men look to the sanitary

conditions, not of their own house merely, but of the neighbourhood round. Christians, too, often think only of their own souls and not of others. IV. IS IT BECAUSE I AM FIGHTING TOO MUCH IN MY OWN STRENGTH? The late Isaac Taylor, the engraver, was a very holy but a very poor man, and had much to try him; it was his wont to retire for an hour each day for communion with God. So he won, and so must we win, spiritual victory. (*Joseph Ogle.*)

Ver. 8. O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles.—*The sending out of light and truth:—I. THE FEELINGS HERE EXPRESSED.* 1. A deep sense of darkness. 2. Belief in God as the source of spiritual life. 3. Earnest desire after Him. His soul wanted light—God's light; he knew that it must be sent out; also he desired God's truth. II. THE PURPOSE OF HIS DESIRE—"Let them lead me;" he knew his own helplessness. III. THE PLACE TO WHICH HE DESIRED TO BE LED.—God's tabernacles, God's holy hill. He would be led to holiness and to the knowledge of God in Christ which the tabernacle set forth. This alone would satisfy his soul. (*J. C. Philpot.*) *The obscurities of Divine revelation* (with Ps. xxxvi. 9):—Perhaps no one ever studied the Bible as a professed revelation from God who has not had such questions cross his mind as the following:—Why is there so much in this book that is obscure and unintelligible? Why is not more information given on great and important questions about which the human mind has always been perplexed? Why are so many subjects left in total darkness in a professed revelation, and others left with only such a feeble glimmering of light as almost to make us wish that there had been none? And this perplexity is increased when we reflect—1. That it would have been so easy for God to have given us the light we crave for. 2. It seems so needful to vindicate His own character. 3. And mere benevolence on His part seems to demand it in order to relieve our distress of mind. And—4. There is so much in the Bible—histories, names, genealogies, etc.—which have lost all interest for us now, and instead of which we should be glad, indeed, to have some explanations of the dark mysteries which oppress us. To obtain a rational view of this matter there are two inquiries. I. WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF LIGHT ACTUALLY IMPARTED IN THE BIBLE? Note the principles which seem to have guided the Divine mind in giving a revelation to man. The question of giving light on the matters referred to must have occurred. But God seems to have determined—1. To leave many subjects perfectly in the dark. It was clearly the design of God to fix an outer limit to human knowledge so far as this world is concerned. Far on the hither side of what we would like to know, the line is drawn, and the whole book is closed at what may, without irreverence, be called—or which, whether irreverent or not, expresses our natural feelings—a provoking point, just at the point where we would be glad to ask questions, and where we by no means feel our minds satisfied with what we possess. I am, for one, willing to concede that among these points are the questions why moral evil was admitted into the system; why misery ever found its way into the empire of an infinitely benevolent and Almighty Creator and moral Governor; and why the period will never arrive when sin and woe shall everywhere come to an end. On these, and on many kindred topics of great interest to man, I confess I have never seen a ray of light cast by any human speculation; and that though I have been silenced, I have not been convinced. Other men think they see light here: I see none. I admit, therefore, that the whole subject of the introduction and existence of evil is all dark to my mind, and that I struggle in vain for the light. 2. A second principle on which revelation seems to have been given, similar to the one just mentioned, is, to state nothing merely to gratify curiosity. The Bible is for practical purposes only, to tell us what we shall do in our relations to God and our fellow-men. 3. Its vital principle was to furnish knowledge enough to be a safe guide to heaven. This was its essential purpose, and if that were secured it was enough. It is like the lighthouse that gleams on a dark and stormy coast, to reveal the haven to the storm-tossed mariner. "It shines over the stormy ocean, only penetrating a darkness which it was never intended to expel." So it is in respect to the Gospel. Man, too, is on a stormy ocean—the ocean of life, and the night is very dark. There are tempests that beat around us; undercurrents that would drift us into unknown seas; rocks that make our voyage perilous. The Gospel is a light "standing on the dark shore of eternity, just simply guiding us there." It reveals to us almost nothing of the land to which we go, but only the way to reach it. It does nothing to answer the thousand

questions which we would ask about that world, but it tells how we may see it with our own eyes. II. Our second inquiry is, WHY WAS THERE NO MORE LIGHT GIVEN? Now, all we can do is to show that our duty is not to object to the Bible because it gives no more light, but to be grateful for that which it has given. As the appropriate feeling of our mariner would be gratitude that that bright and clear, though little light, is kept burning on that stormy coast to guide every vessel that may chance to come into those waters, not of complaint that it does not reveal the hills, and vales, and cities, and hamlets of that land. 1. First, our essential condition on earth is one of discipline and probation. Now, if we would search our own minds, we should probably find that the questions in reference to which we are most disposed to complain because they are not solved, are not those which really embarrass us in the matter of salvation, or which, being solved, would aid us, but those in reference to which our salvation may be equally safe and easy whether they are solved or not. When a man finds himself struggling in a stream, it does nothing to facilitate his escape to know how he came there; nor would it aid the matter if he could determine beyond a doubt why God made streams that men could ever fall into them, and did not make every bank so that it would not crumble beneath the feet. In the condition of man, therefore, regarded as in a state of discipline, all that is needed is that a man's safety shall not be endangered by his lack of light, and that the darkness shall be such as to furnish a healthful exercise of his powers. It is good for man to be stimulated to inquiry, to feel, not as Alexander did, that there were no more worlds to be conquered, but that a boundless field of inquiry is ever open before him. God would not stop the career of noble thought and the path of discovery by pouring down a flood of light on all those regions so that no more was left for the efforts of honourable ambition. The explorer of unknown lands is cheered because a vast and inviting field is before him, which the foot of man has never trod. It was this which animated Columbus when his prow first crossed the line beyond which a ship had ever sailed, and plunged into unknown seas. Every wave that was thrown up had a new interest and beauty, from the fact that its repose had never been disturbed before by the keel of a vessel; and when his eyes first saw the land, and he prostrated himself and kissed the earth, his glory was at the highest, for he saw what in old ages was unknown before. And let all inquirers on these great questions remember, however perplexed they may now be, that in a few years, as the result of calm examination and of maturer reflection and observation, most of these difficulties will disappear. Why may I not hope, then, as to the difficulties that remain? 2. It is not absolutely certain, it is not even probable, that we could comprehend any statements which could be made on those points which now perplex us (John iii. 12). Remember that it depends on the measure of our faculties and attainments how far we can grasp ideas that are set before us. Much may be said, yet but little be understood. Apply all this to those mysteries of the moral government of God. Are you certain that you could comprehend the high principles of the Divine administration even if they were stated to you? 3. We are in the infancy of our being; we have but just opened our eyes upon this wonderful universe, which in its structure demanded all the wisdom, and goodness, and power of an infinite God! Very few of us have lived through the period of seventy revolving suns; a majority of us not fifty; many not twenty. We have but just learned to speak, to handle things, to talk, to walk. But yesterday we were at our mother's breasts. We knew not anything. And now, forsooth, we wonder that we do not know all about God, and these worlds, and the moral government of the Most High. We sit in judgment on what our Maker has told us. We are sullen and silent; we repress our gratitude; we throw back His Bible in His face; we have no songs and no thanksgivings, because we are not told all about this earth, and these skies, about heaven and about hell, and about the God that made, and that rules over all! (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The confidence and joy of faith in approaching to God*—In these verses we may observe—1. The genuine disposition and desire of a gracious soul, when privileged with an opportunity of attending upon the ordinances of divine appointment. Ordinances themselves will not satisfy, but it will be the desire of that soul to be brought near to God, so as to have real communion with Him in them. 2. How, or in what manner, a believer is enabled to approach unto God in His ordinances, so as to have communion with Him in them. Can he find the way to God himself? No, he must be led; directed by a light from above. 3. In what manner believers are helped to approach unto God when He is pleased to send out His light and truth to lead

thorn, and bring them to His holy hill and to His tabernacles, or to direct them in their approaches to him in duties and ordinances. Then they are enabled to go unto God as "their God," and "the exceeding joy"; or to appear before Him with becoming confidence and holy joy. From the words we may observe the following doctrine. When the people of God have an opportunity of approaching to Him in the ordinances of His grace, particularly in solemn ordinances, they ought to draw near to Him with holy confidence and holy joy. I. OFFER A FEW GENERAL REMARKS FOR ILLUSTRATING THE SUBJECT. 1. Communion with God is sometimes the privilege of His people even while they are here on earth. Nor is this the privilege of a few eminent saints only, but is common to believers. 2. The ordinances of God's own appointment are the ordinary means of communion and fellowship with Him. When these are despised or neglected, all pretensions to communion with God are vain. 3. Real communion with God in ordinances is a rare attainment. Many read and hear the Word, regularly attend upon the ordinances of God, and even go to a communion table who are utterly unacquainted with it. 4. Sinful men can have no communion with God but by sacrifice. They ask, they expect, they desire no blessing from God, but for the sake of Christ who gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. v. 2). 5. Believers themselves who have formerly been brought near to God, and enjoyed His gracious presence cannot have access to Him anew, or any comfortable communion with Him in ordinances, but under the gracious influence of His Holy Spirit. 6. As communion with God in ordinances is a rare attainment, it is also a precious and valuable attainment. It relieves the believer under all his burdens, and comforts him amidst all his griefs and sorrows. It is a pledge and earnest of future glory; yea, it is, as it were, heaven begun. II. SPEAK SOMETHING CONCERNING THAT HOLY CONFIDENCE AND JOY WITH WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD OUGHT TO APPROACH UNTO HIM IN THE ORDINANCES AND DUTIES OF HIS WORSHIP, and particularly in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which is a feast He has made for His friends, in partaking of which they are called to rejoice before Him, as Israel were commanded to do when they kept the feasts of the Lord, during the Mosaic economy. 1. The confidence with which believers are warranted to draw near unto God, when they have an opportunity of waiting upon Him in His ordinances, is not inconsistent with a humbling and self-abasing sense of their own unworthiness and sinfulness, but rather supposes it. 2. The confidence of faith, with which the people of God ought to draw near to Him in the ordinances and duties of His worship, differs greatly from that presumptuous confidence which is to be found with hypocrites and self-righteous persons in their approaches to Him. 3. That holy joy with which believers, imitating David's example, ought to approach unto God in His ordinances, and particularly in solemn ordinances, is very consistent with deep and great sorrow for sin. Indeed, the one cannot be without the other. 4. The joy of the godly, when brought near unto God in His ordinances, is not a carnal, but a spiritual joy; and therefore no outward troubles or afflictions can hinder the exercise of it under the influence of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of faith. 5. The confidence and joy with which believers ought to nor make any suitable improvement of His ordinances. 5. Because by approach- various degrees. A strong faith begets strong confidence and great joy; a weak faith is accompanied with little confidence and little joy. A strong faith glorifies God, yet He will accept of a weak faith. III. SHOW WHY THE PEOPLE OF GOD OUGHT TO APPROACH UNTO HIM IN HIS ORDINANCES WITH BECOMING CONFIDENCE AND HOLY JOY. 1. Because He is a God reconciled in Christ. 2. Because the way of access to God, which Christ the glorious Mediator has opened by His blood, was opened just for the benefit of sinners who deserve no favour, but, on the other hand, are obnoxious to the justice and wrath of God. 3. A sure foundation is laid for this confidence and joy in our approaches to God. 4. Because without some degree of this holy confidence and joy persons can have no communion with God, nor make any suitable improvement of His ordinances. 5. Because by approach- ing unto God with humble confidence and holy joy, they do in an especial manner glorify Him. 6. Confidence and holy joy in our approaches to God are not only warranted, but required in the word of God (Deut. xvi. 10, 11; Ps. lxiii. 8; xcvi. 2). IV. APPLICATION. Is it so that the people of God are warranted to approach unto Him in His ordinances with confidence and joy? then hence we may see—1. The great love of God to sinners of mankind. 2. How much believers are indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him that they have access unto the Father. 3. This text and doctrine serves to inform us of the nature and excellency of true



faith. Relying upon the testimony of God in the Gospel concerning the method of reconciliation and ground of acceptance with Him, it inspires the soul with holy confidence, and fills the heart with holy joy in approaching to God. 4. We must not always judge of the privileges of believers by their exercise or the actings of their faith. Though now through the prevalence of unbelief, they frequently cannot take the comfort of these, they shall not lose their interest in them. 5. We may see who will be worthy communicants at the table of the Lord, viz. those who have a real desire to be brought near to God Himself, and whose hope and confidence, in their approaches to Him, are wholly bottomed upon the gracious revelation that He has made of His name as a God in Christ, and upon what Christ has done and suffered, to procure access to God for guilty sinners. 6. Hence see matter of trial and examination. If you are true believers who desire to enjoy communion with God in His ordinances, and none else are warranted to partake of the Gospel-feast in view, David's petition will be yours, "O send out Thy light."

(1) You esteem and set a high value upon the ordinances of God. His tabernacles are amiable to you. (2) Absence and distance from God will be very painful and distressing to you. (3) Ordinances will not content you. It is a meeting with God Himself that you desire. When this is wanting, ordinances, however excellent in themselves, are to the believer like dry breasts and empty pits, that afford no satisfaction, no comfort, no refreshment. (4) You dare not approach to God but by a Mediator. (5) You have seen the need of drawing power in order to your being brought near to God in any ordinance or duty. This you were not only convinced of at first conversion, but you are sensible of it still. (6) When at any time you are brought near to God in ordinances, no degrees of communion with Him that you attain to will fully satisfy you; but you will desire still to be brought nearer and nearer to Him. 7. Hence we see the duty of all who have an opportunity of approaching to God in His ordinances, and particularly of believers who design to partake of the Gospel-feast in view, but perhaps are labouring under various discouragements. They are called to draw near to God with humble confidence and holy joy.

(1) Consider what a God He is whom you are called to approach unto. Not an absolute, angry God, but a God in Christ, a sin-pardoning, a reconciled God; a God with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption. (2) Consider that however unworthy, guilty and vile you are in yourselves, there is a sufficiency of merit in Christ to procure your access to God and acceptance with Him. (D. Wilson.) *Desiring communion with God*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S EARNEST PETITION. 1. The subject of his request. (1) "Light" is that glorious creature

"which maketh manifest" to the sense of sight surrounding objects; and thus enables a person to perceive himself and his situation with its advantages or disadvantages, so as to avail himself of what is favourable and to avoid what is otherwise. Metaphorically, it signifies mental illumination, or the means or instruments of such illumination (John iii. 19). Thus the epithet is applied to "believers" (Eph. v. 8), who are "children of the light," because illuminated. And to God, word (Ps. cxix. 105; Hos. vi. 5); and to His ministers and people (Matt. v. 14; John v. 35) as the means of illumination. Light is also a cheerful subject, and therefore it is used to denote prosperity, comfort, felicity (Ps. xcvii. 11; Isa. lviii. 8, etc.). (2) The "truth" here requested may mean religious truth in general, as in John xvii. 17; and, if so, then the prayer is that of every missionary, and of every friend of missions. But it more properly intends the fulfilment of God's promises to the petitioner; a verifying of those promises in his experience, that he might prove and rejoice in their truth. 2. The intention of his request—a participation in religious enjoyments. (1) An acknowledgment of need. (2) Not only a willingness, but anxiety to be led and taught. (3) A resolution to walk in the light, and to submit to the truth of God. (4) A humble anticipation of being so instructed as to be enabled to correct past errors, and of coming to worship God in the beauty of holiness (Ps. xlii. 4; cxxii. 1). II. THE PSALMIST'S PIOUS PURPOSE. 1. The object of his devotion—"God," as opposed to the creatures. Not domestic, social or public pleasures or achievements; but God, who is the source of light and truth (Jas. i. 17). "My God," as opposed to every other, and peculiarly mine. The object of my affection; the object of my trust (Ps. lxxiii. 24-28). 2. The fervour of his devotion—"Unto God my exceeding joy," or, "the gladness of my joy." How inferior the joy of the sensualist, the worldling, etc. (Ps. iv. 7; Isa. ix. 3). 3. The manner of his devotion—"I will go unto the altar," etc. (1) He would sacrifice. Is a sin-offering necessary? It shall be offered. Is a thank-offering due? It shall be rendered. (2) He would praise—"upon the

harp," etc. "We have an altar," etc. "By him therefore let us offer," etc. (Hob. xiii. 10, 15). (3) This was public worship; an open avowal of God's goodness, and His servant's obligation. The psalmist was a man of personal piety, which he ovined by practical piety. Are we such? (4) This was a public dedication: an engagement of himself in God's service in any post that might be assigned him. Are you imitating this conduct, thus praying, thus purposing? (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The ascent of man*:—1. There are five stages in the light of God. The first is simple leading—the guiding of a child. Then comes the height of ecstasy—the holy hill; I stand above the world and laugh at the cares of time. By and by comes a third stage; I descend from the hill to the tabernacles. Ecstasy subsides into peace; the height sinks into the home; love on the wing becomes love in the nest. After this comes the light of sacrifice—"Then shall I go unto the altar of God." "Then," not before. Peace alone can sacrifice for others. I cannot sacrifice when I am being led; I am thinking too much about my own steps. I cannot sacrifice when I am in ecstasy; I am too intent on my own joy. But when I get peace, I go out from myself altogether; I go to the altar. At last the climax comes. The altar itself becomes "my exceeding joy"—the rapture of forgetting self in the care of another. 2. It is a spiral stair, but it is golden. Sometimes it seems to make no progress. There are moments when my feet grow weary with their climbing, and the end is not yet. Shine from the topmost height, Thou Divine Joy! Often I am led by a way which by myself I would not go; I see not the Christ, but only the manger. Shine out, Thou Christ, and the manger shall be luminous. Shine out, and the altar shall glow with the light of coming fires. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*) *God's light and truth our only guides*:—I. WHAT THE PSALMIST HERE ASKS OF GOD. 1. Something that he wished to enjoy. (1) Some think he means but one thing: as if he had said, "Send out the light of Thy truth." (2) Others understand it of the Word and Providence of God. (3) Others, of God's favour and faithfulness. (4) Others, of the Word of God and His Holy Spirit; or, of the Spirit working by the Word. 2. The manner in which David desired and expected to have the blessing communicated to him for which he prayed. "Send out." (1) This imports that God's light and His truth were, for the present, withdrawn, in a great measure, from David's view; and from the view of such as were witnesses of his condition. They were like a person who retires from view, and hides himself in a secret place; so that, if David had been to consult with flesh and blood, he might have doubted of their existence. (2) It imports that David still believed in God as a God of light and truth, even when these perfections ceased to be manifested in his behalf. He was assured that God knew all that befell him; and, notwithstanding all, he was persuaded that God would fully accomplish all His promises to him, and to his house. (3) It imports that when God should interpose for His servant's deliverance, as he confidently expected He would, then he firmly hoped to see the Divine wisdom and faithfulness vindicated from all those aspersions that had been cast upon them. 3. David's earnestness a fervency in this petition. II. DAVID'S END IN ASKING THAT FOR WHICH HE PRAYS SO FERVENTLY. 1. The more general end. "Let them lead me." He wanted to be guided and conducted by the wisdom and faithfulness of God, not only in his present difficulty, but in every other step of his journey through the wilderness. (1) Indirectly, this may be said to take place when the providence of God, under the influence of His infinite wisdom and faithfulness, manages all that concerns the person in such a manner as may tend to his spiritual good, and to the accomplishment of the promises of God to him. (2) But God's light and truth may be said to lead His people more directly and sensibly, when, in His infinite wisdom and faithfulness, He gives them such counsel, instruction and direction as enables them to keep the way of duty, and prevents their turning aside after any crooked ways (Ps. xxv. 8, 9; Isa. lv. 4). 2. The more particular end for which David begs a manifestation of God's light and truth. (1) A removal of all those obstructions and hindrances that stood in the way of an attendance upon the solemn worship and ordinances of God. (2) A being directed and enabled to the acceptable performance of all those preparatory duties that are necessary in order to a regular attendance upon God in solemn ordinances. (3) A being strengthened by the grace of God, and enabled to attend upon God's ordinances "in a regular and acceptable manner." (4) A being admitted to enjoy that spiritual advantage of which ordinances are the means. (5) A being brought home, at length, to the full and immediate enjoyment of God in heaven. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. For information. (1) It informs us of the

necessary connection between an attendance upon God in His ordinances here, and the full enjoyment of Him in the most holy place hereafter. (2) How vain and fruitless it is to pay such an attendance upon ordinances as may be attained without any Divine assistance. (3) How vain and useless all that light is in religious matters which proceeds not from God Himself. (4) They who would live as Christians ought to have their dependence upon God for leading in every step of their journey through the wilderness as well as in their attendance upon Divine ordinances. 2. For trial. (1) Are you sensible that it is a duty, indispensably binding upon you, to ascend the hill of God and to enter His tabernacles as you have an opportunity? (2) Is it real matter of joy and rejoicing to you that God has given you so near a prospect of another opportunity to ascend His hill, and wait upon Him in solemn ordinances? (3) Do you see the necessity of being brought by God Himself to His holy hill and to His tabernacles? That it is impossible for you to attend upon any ordinance acceptably without supernatural assistance? (4) Is it your present exercise; and are you resolved that it shall always be your endeavour to set forward in every act of worship, praying to God, as does the royal psalmist in the text, for the conduct and assistance of His light and truth? 3. For humiliation and mourning. (1) How many are there among us who are altogether careless about being present on God's holy hill or in His tabernacles! A sad evidence that they know little about solid happiness, or about where it is to be found. (2) How many satisfy themselves with such an attendance upon ordinances as may be attained without any supernatural assistance; and how often are we all chargeable with this sin. (3) How many are left to follow false lights in attempting to ascend God's hill, and to go into His tabernacle! To what else can it be owing, that "altars are set up against altars" in every corner; and there are so many distinct and opposite societies, all pretending to worship God, and that in His own tabernacles? (*John Young, D.D.*) *Thy light*:—Jesus brought light to the world, and they who follow Him need walk no longer in darkness, for He is the light of life. For—I. HE LIGHTS EVERY MAN TO THE HEART OF GOD. You need to be spiritually minded to perceive this. As a blind man cannot understand colour, so an unspiritual man cannot understand God. But Jesus Christ came to reveal God. II. HE REVEALS TO US THE EVERLASTING LOVE OF GOD. We often think that because we are bad the Lord has turned His back upon us; but Jesus, the light of the world, testified by His life and death that instead of turning from you, the Lord, like a good physician, seeks after poor sin-sick souls to heal them and save them. Jesus Christ is the Divine light showing us how much higher and holier than we can conceive is the character of God, that His love is infinite, and that He will seek His lost sheep until He finds them. III. Jesus Christ is also the light of God and the light of the world in illuminating the grandest of all truths, THAT GOD'S CHARITY IS UNIVERSAL. Like the blessed sunlight, God's love is diffused with equal and bounteous hand over the cottage and the palace. God's great heart is not partial. He loves my poor friend quite as much as the richest man in the land. His charity beams upon all men alike. IV. JESUS CHRIST IS ALSO A CHEERING AND A TRANSFORMING LIGHT. When the sun's rays fall upon a diamond, it glistens with intense beauty; but when the light is gone, the diamond can be no more seen in the dark than a stone. So Christ lights up the Christian. And Christ makes him also a light giver as well as a light receiver. V. CHRIST BRINGS IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.*—*The altar of joy*:—This is the expression of a twofold desire, a desire for communion with God, and for communion with God through public worship. There is a great wail of sorrow in the psalm, but it is not a sorrow without hope; faith struggles with despondence, and gets the victory. The authorship of the psalm we cannot be certain of. Nor of the occasion, whether some event in David's reign, or in Ahaz's, or in the captivity, or yet some other. Augustine held that the psalm is the proper expression of the Church while she is an exile in this world. They are unquestionably words for all individual souls who feel that something intervenes between them and God—whether it be exile of the body or of the heart only. Often we are separated from the house of God, from the worship that we love, and which has been so precious because so helpful to us, and we yearn for restoration to our privileges. Or it may be the yearning of the heart for spiritual joy, for delight in worship, for the kindling inspiration, the answering voice, the holy rapture which once we knew but now do not, though all the outward service is still

ours. Or it may be the longing of the holy soul for God's heaven, that presence of God in which there is fulness of joy and of which sometimes in our holiest hours we have visions and foretastes. Thus in different experiences and moods we make these precious words our own. But to the psalmist they told—I. OF HIS STRONG DESIRE FOR RESTORATION TO THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. It is of the very essence of the religious heart that it should yearn for God. Let a man's religious life be full and fervent, and the use of what are termed "the means of grace" may be safely left to the instincts of his own soul. But does not every pious heart sympathize with David's delight in the house of the Lord? Who of us has not realized there a fuller and more fervent feeling of His presence than anywhere else? Who of us neglects or disparages God's house without coldness and dullness creeping over our whole devotional life? Its services are the festivals of our piety, it is the place where His honour dwelleth. But the psalmist speaks of worship before God's altar. Why the altar rather than the mercy-seat? It is not enough to say that he spoke the language of his dispensation, which was one in which sacrifice was prominent. Why was it so? There is but one satisfactory answer—that it was an institution prophetic and preparatory to the great sacrifice of Christ. By no satisfactory process, at least to minds like my own, can it be explained away or reduced to a mere symbol of self-sacrifice. The facts and instincts of our moral consciousness all agree to the doctrine of sacrifice as it is set forth in the Bible. II. THE PSALMIST'S SUPERLATIVE JOY IN SUCH WORSHIP. Why have we not more joy? It is absent almost everywhere. In all churches and services, in hymns and prayers. It is because we fail of the personal character essential to it, and because we think hard and false thoughts of God. (*H. Allen, D.D.*) *The altar of God*:—The devotional spirit is the life of religion; and there never was a man of piety who was not a man of prayer. The text opens to us two important views. I. THE PECULIAR NATURE OF THAT WORSHIP WHICH GOD HAS AUTHORIZED. It is going to the altar of God. We ought all to be aware that there is a peculiarity in the worship which God authorizes. There is—1. The recognition of our sin. When man was innocent he needed no atonement. There was no altar in Paradise. But now we need one. 2. Our first liability to punishment is acknowledged. 3. And that God is propitious through the atonement He has appointed. A mere sacrifice is not sufficient, for it might have been a human invention merely. But this God has appointed. Atonement is for the penitent (*cf. 2 Chron. vi. 29–31*). II. THE EMPHATIC DESCRIPTION WHICH IS GIVEN OF THE JOY OF IT.—"God, my exceeding joy." This joy arises from—1. Our being placed in the presence of a Being of infinite glory and perfection. It supposes reconciliation with God. 2. Because this worship enables us to appropriate this display of glory to ourselves. David speaks of "*My God*." 3. It is the joy of confidence. 4. And in going to the altar of God we have the renewed assurances of His favour. 5. And there is the joy of life. (*R. Watson.*) *The believer going to God as his exceeding joy*:—Especially does he thus come to God in the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which was called by the ancients the Eucharist or Sacrifice of Praise. Now—I. IN THIS ORDINANCE THERE ARE TO THE SINCERE CHRISTIAN MANY SOURCES OF JOY. 1. The fullest assurance and the clearest evidence of the forgiveness of sins. 2. The strongest and most illustrious proof of Divine love. 3. The fullest assurance of receiving from God all that is necessary for comfort and happiness while in this world, and that both for spiritual and temporal life. 4. A pledge and earnest of heaven. II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT of this subject. See—1. How great is God's goodness in providing for us now so rich entertainment. 2. What joy and consolation there are here to the fearful and doubting Christian. 3. And, indeed, to all without exception, because here we see that God is in Christ "reconciling the world unto Himself." (*J. Witherspoon.*) *God, my exceeding joy*:—I. CHEERFULNESS IS HEALTH AND DUTY (*Prov. xvii. 22; Neh. viii. 10; Isa. lxiv. 5*). It is our duty as Christians to rise to

"What nothing earthly gives, nor can destroy  
The soul's calm sunshine and her heartfelt joy."

II. GOD ALONE IS "EXCEEDING JOY." He alone lasts, He only overflows. And all this but natural to Him who is the Lord of the universe. And this exceeding joy is undisturbed by any fear of coming to an end. The bridal pair are very happy, but the thought often comes, One of us must survive the other; which, alas? But the joy of God cannot be disturbed by any calamity. And how elevated

it is. For "none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." III. THERE IS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THINKING ABOUT GOD AND ENJOYING HIM. It is one thing to apprehend God, and another to appropriate Him. The God of experience is the God we need. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The good man's duty and blessedness*:—"And then I shall be happy: heaven only can make me happier. Oh, if I can but get near to God and procure a smile from Him, all the world will be as nothing to me." A happy frame of mind this, to meet trouble in. Consider—I. THE GOOD MAN'S DUTY—going to God. This implies—1. Submission as to his Sovereign. 2. Friendship so as to commune with God as to his troubles, joys, sins, fears, hopes, needs. II. THE GOOD MAN'S BLESSEDNESS—exceeding joy in God. It exceeds all other joy. 1. In its nature. It is not earthly but spiritual and divine. 2. As to its degree. Creature joy is but little—a drop—at most, but in God's presence is fulness of joy. 3. As to duration. It is as the house on the rock compared with that on the sand. Let us ask, What is our joy? III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. How wrong not to go to God. We are either still children of wrath, or if not there has been some sad declension from God. 2. How great our obligation to Christ. 3. Let us long for heaven. (*Samuel Lavington.*) *Communion with God, the Christian's aim in attending Divine ordinances*:—I. IN WHAT MANNER WE SHOULD ATTEND UPON GOD'S ORDINANCES; IN IMITATION OF DAVID'S EXAMPLE. 1. He resolved to deal with God only by the intervention of an atonement. 2. He intended not to continue an idle spectator, nor to consider himself as such, during his attendance in God's tabernacles. Here is the market-place, where all that is truly valuable is exposed to sale by God's authority, and may be bought without money and without price. 3. He resolved to bring somewhat with him into God's tabernacles which he might offer upon His altar. And every Gospel worshipper, when he "comes into God's courts, ought to bring an offering with him." If you are duly affected with what He has done for you, nothing less will satisfy you than to offer yourself, and all your services, and all your talents, and all your possessions as a sacrifice of thanksgiving upon the Gospel altar. 4. He would present his gift upon the altar, and expect the acceptance of it only in that way. When you present your supplications to God, remember that you can receive no gracious answer, whatever it is that you pray for, unless through Christ. And when you make an offering of yourself and your services to God, consider always that it is only for the sake of Christ and His atoning sacrifice that any of your offerings can be accepted. II. WHAT IT IS TO GO TO GOD HIMSELF AT HIS ALTAR OR IN HIS ORDINANCES. 1. A cheerful and ready forsaking of all sin. Our degree of intimacy with God in ordinances will always bear a proportion to our diligence and success in cleansing ourselves from sin. 2. A turning of our back upon the world and leaving it behind us. We must go to heaven, not by any local motion, but by an elevation of our hearts, affections and desires above the vanities of a present world; and setting them upon "the things that are above," "where Christ is at the right hand of God." 3. A believing acceptance of God Himself as the person's everlasting and all-satisfying portion upon the footing of His own gracious grant and promise. In that wonderful declaration, "I am the Lord thy God," so often repeated, God makes over Himself to us; as a portion, in the enjoyment of which we may be supremely blessed, even through an endless eternity. 4. An offering up to God all our desires in a way of fervent supplication. 5. A diligent searching after God, and after communion with Him in His ordinances. 6. An attendance upon God in ordinances with a view of being so much nearer to the full enjoyment of Him in the holy of holies above. III. IN WHAT RESPECT IT IS, OR ON WHAT GROUNDS, THAT GOD MAY BE CALLED HIS PEOPLE'S EXCEEDING JOY. 1. Why is God called His people's "joy"? (1) God is the author and the efficient cause of all the believer's joy. It is one of the fruits of His Spirit dwelling in His people. (2) God is the object of the believer's joy. 2. Why the believer's joy in God has the epithet "exceeding." (1) It exceeds all the joy that arises from the possession of any other, or of all other objects. All other objects are but the works of His hands. Therefore, that joy of which He is the object exceeds all that arises from other things, as far as the Creator is superior to the creature. (2) It exceeds all the grief, heaviness and sorrow incident to the child of God through the manifold trials and miseries of all this life. IV. INFERENCES. 1. All attendance upon Divine ordinances must be fruitless and unprofitable when persons are not concerned to come to Christ in ordinances. 2. No person comes really and acceptably to Christ who comes not, at the same time, unto God through Him. 3. In vain will any person attempt to come unto God, any otherwise than through Jesus

Christ. 4. In this text we may see who among us shall be acceptable worshippers in God's tabernacles; and particularly who will be welcome guests at His holy table to-day. *God our exceeding joy*:—God is the exceeding joy of the godly man. 1. As the immutable source of his supreme satisfaction. Let a man possess the favour of Him in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and he needs no more. Our lesser sources of satisfaction may be destroyed, but our greatest can neither perish nor change by the influence of evil. 2. As a perpetual supply of good which he may always appropriate. As the objects which constitute the materials of earthly happiness are all external, consequently they, as well as the happiness they create, are alike subject to change and decay. But they who rejoice in God have that redundant spring whose waters fail not. External sources of comfort may be dried up, like the prophet's book, but the inward solacements of piety remain. 3. As the wise controller of all worldly events. It is on this ground that the believer can maintain his serenity of mind amidst outward causes of perturbation. Amidst all his trials he is well assured that God has attached an ultimate design of mercy to every sorrow. He can generally perceive that design, even if he cannot understand its full extent of good. In some cases it comes to prove and exhibit the excellency of his principles, the beauty of confiding faith, and the power of quiet meekness. In other instances it is to correct the evils of his heart, wean him from earth, and stimulate him to seek all his joys at God's right hand. 4. As that Being who will eventually recompense the trials and sorrows of His people with eternal joy. Here the Christian is but a pilgrim through the wilderness preceding that promised good land, of which he gets but few and scanty gleams. Here, he has the flower of hope; there, God will give him the fruit of perfect joy. The largest desires of the soul shall hereafter be amply satisfied. The spirit, freed from all the sorrows, sins, and imperfections of this world, shall find perfect purity its element, and shall reflect the happiness of God for ever, as jewels the rays of sparkling light. (*Jas. Foster.*) *God—the saint's exceeding joy*. It is observable that, in the courts of kings, children and common people are much taken with pictures and rich shows, and feed their fancies with the sight of rich hangings and fine things; but the grave statesman passeth by such things as not worthy taking notice of—his business is with the king. Thus it is that in this world most men stay in the outer rooms and admire the low things of the world, and look upon them as pieces of much excellence; but the spiritually minded man looketh over all these things that are here below—his business is with God. (*J. Spencer.*)

**Ver. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.**—*Discouragement's recovery*:—This psalm was penned by David, which shows the passions of his soul; for God's children know the estate of their own souls for the strengthening of their trust and bettering their obedience. Now, this is the difference between psalms and other places of Scripture. Other scriptures speak mostly from God to us; but in the Psalms this holy man doth speak mostly to God and his own soul; so that this psalm is an expostulation of David with his own soul in a troubled estate; when being banished from the house of God, he expostulates the matter with his soul: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" The words tell of—I. **DAVID'S PERPLEXED ESTATE**. "Why art thou cast down," etc. 1. How did he come to be thus perplexed? He was in great trouble and affliction. A soul that is lively in grace cannot endure to live under small means of salvation. 2. The second thing that troubled this holy man was the blasphemous words of wicked men. Therefore if we would try our state to be good, see how we take to heart everything that is done against religion. Can a child be patient when he sees his father abused? God's children are sensible of such things. But observe—1. A child of God must not be too much discouraged and cast down in afflictions. There must be measure both in sorrow and in joy. Not as Nabal (*Sam. xxv. 36, 37*). And we may know when this measure is exceeded if our mourning and sorrow do not bring us to God, but drives us from God. Grief, sorrow and humility are good; but discouragement is evil (*Exod. vi. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 7*). Christians must not exceed in anything; when they do they are overcome of their passions. And to be cast down and disquieted is sin, because it doth turn to the reproach of religion and God Himself; and because their so sinking under afflictions never yield any good fruit, and it hinders us both from and in holy duties; for either we do not perform

them at all, or otherwise they are done but weakly; for as the troubled eye cannot see well, so the troubled soul cannot do good, nor receive good. Observe—II. HIS EXPOSTULATION WITH HIMSELF. "Why art thou cast down?" etc. The word in the original shows that it is the nature of sorrow to bring the soul downwards. Sorrow and sin agree both in this, for as they come from below, so they bring the soul down to the earth. 1. What is meant by casting down, and why doth he find fault with himself for it? Because it breeds disquieting. Hence it is said in Ps. xxxvii. 1, "Fret not thyself," etc. Here is no true humiliation but abundance of corruption. But note—III. THE REMEDY TO WHICH THE PSALMIST TURNS: he first reflects upon and expostulates with his soul, and then bids it "trust in God." And so we learn that God's children in their greatest troubles recover themselves, that the prerogative of a Christian in these disquietings, and in all estates, is, he hath God and himself to speak unto, whereby he can remove solitariness. Put him into a dungeon, yet he may speak unto God there, and speak unto himself. Let all the tyrants in the world do their worst to a Christian; if God be with him he is cheerful still. (*R. Sibbes*). *The psalmist's dialogue with his soul*:—These words occur thrice, at short intervals, in this and the preceding psalm. They appear there twice, and here once. Quite obviously the division into two psalms has been a mistake, for the whole constitutes one composition. The first part of each of the little sections, into which the one original psalm is divided by the repetition of this refrain, is a weary monotone of complaint. I. THE DREARY MONOTONY OF COMPLAINT. We all know the temptation of being overmastered by some calamity or some sad thought. We keep chewing some bitter morsel and rolling it under our tongues so as to suck all the bitterness out of it that we can. You sometimes see upon the stage of a theatre a funeral procession represented, and the supernumeraries pass across the stage and go round at the back and come in again at the other end, and so keep up an appearance of numbers far beyond the reality. That is like what you and I do with our sorrows. A bee has an eye, with I do not know how many facets, which multiply the one thing it looks at into an enormous number; and some of us have eyes made on that fashion, or rather we manufacture for our eyes spectacles on that plan, by which we look at our griefs or our depressing circumstances, and see them multiplied and nothing but them. "That way madness lies." II. WISE SELF-QUESTIONING. There are a great many of our griefs, and moods, and sorrows that will not stand that question. Like ghosts, if you speak to them, they vanish. It is enough, in not a few of the lighter and more gnat-like troubles that beset us, for us to say to ourselves, "What are we putting ourselves into such a fuss about? Why art thou cast down?" We cannot control our thoughts nor our moods directly, but we can do a great deal to regulate, modify and diminish those of them that need diminishing, and increase those of them that need to be increased, by looking at the reasons for them. And if a man will do that more habitually and conscientiously than most of us are accustomed to do it, in regard both to passing thoughts and overpowering moods that threaten to become unwholesomely permanent, he will regain a firmer control of himself—and that is the best wealth that a man can have. Very many men who makes failures, morally, religiously, or even socially and commercially, do so because they have no command over themselves, and because they have not asked this question of each sly temptation that comes wheedling up to the gate of the soul with whispering breath and secret suggestions—"What do you want here? What reason have you for wishing to come in?" "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"—question yourselves about your moods, and especially about your sad moods, and you will have gone a long way to make yourselves better and happier people than you have ever been before. III. AN EFFORT TWICE FOILED AND AT LAST SUCCESSFUL. In the cathedral of St. Mark's, Venice, there is a mosaic that represents Christ in Gethsemane. You remember that, like the psalmist, He prayed three times there, and twice came back, not having received His desire, and the third time He did receive it. The devout artist has presented Him thus: the first time prone on the ground, and the sky all black; the second time raised a little, and a strip of blue in one corner; and the third time kneeling erect, and a beam from heaven, brighter than the radiance of the Paschal moon, striking right down upon Him, and the strengthening angel standing beside Him. That was the experience of the Lord, and it may be the experience of the servant. Do not give up the effort at self-control and victory over circumstances that tempt to despondency or to sadness. Even if you fail this time, still the failure has left some increased capacity for the next attempt, and God helping, the next time will

be successful. IV. **THE CONQUERING HOPE.** The psalmist's question to his soul is not answered. It needed no answer. To put it was the first struggle to strip off the poisoned sackcloth in which he had wrapped himself. But his next word, his command to his soul to hope in God, completes the process of putting off the robe of mourning and girding himself with gladness. He makes one great leap, as it were, across the black flood that has been ringing him round, and bids his soul: "Hope thou in God." The one medicine for a disquieted, cast-down soul is hope in God. People say a great deal about the buoyant energy of hope bearing a man up over his troubles. Yes! so it does in some measure, but there is only one case in which there is a real bearing up over the troubles, and that is where the hope is in God. But the hope that is in God must be a hope that is based upon a present possession of Him. It is only if a man has a present experience of the blessings of strong and all-sufficient help that come to him now, when he can say, "My God, the health of my countenance," that he has the right, or that he has the inclination or the power to paint the future with brightness. And we shall not attain either to that experience of God as ours, or to the hope that, springing from it, will triumph over all disquieting circumstances without a dead lift of effort. There is a great lack amongst all Christian people of realizing that it is as much their duty to cultivate the hope of the Christian as it is their duty to cultivate any other characteristic of the Christian life. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Despondency: its cause and cure*.—I. **WHY THE SOUL IS BOWED DOWN AND DISQUIETED.** 1. The soul may be bowed down for lack of the old help and strength got from the means of grace. As our hearts are framed we need help from habit, from outward expression, from worship, from voice and ear, from sympathy and exhortation, from words and sacraments. 2. The soul may be cast down from thoughts and doubts springing at once out of the man's own mind, growing at once out of the evil of his very spiritual nature. 3. The soul may be bowed down by the burden of wilful sin, neglected duty, or worldly indulgence. No amount of religious fervour, or doctrinal knowledge will keep the heart glad in which is the consciousness of wrong. 4. But all this sore trouble is deepened, if it happens to come upon us in times of worldly woe, when we can least afford to miss God's peace, when we are in greatest need of comfort. Why, was it not just this we had counted on, that when all earthly fountains would be dried up, then the river of God would still flow on? II. **WHY THE SOUL NEED NOT BE BOWED DOWN.** 1. God would have us to learn and know that He Himself is an all-sufficient comforter, apart from any outward helps or earthly sympathy. Thus we enter further into the secret of God's covenant. 2. All progress in religion seems to be from dark to dark. The plant at first strikes its roots in the dark; and it would appear as if the spirit needed fresh times of sorrow before it will be moved to larger growth. 3. We must learn the insufficiency of present attainments before we will seek more. How vague and dim are the hopes and expectations of many! In worldly prosperity such meagre experience does well enough; but, oh! it is not well for the soul to rest there. "Come unto Me," He cries, now loudly, now whisperingly; and it is to move and bend us He has to send darkness and trouble. How natural it is we should be disquieted; and is it not the case that so soon as we see this good wise reason for our dejection, immediately we are delivered? And though it was good for us to be dejected, yet we say, why should we be so? "Why art thou cast down," why dost thou still continue to be cast down, O my soul? (*R. MacEllar.*) *The psalmist's remonstrance with his soul*.—There is a kind of dialogue between the psalmist and his soul. He, as it were, cuts himself into two halves, and reasons and remonstrates with himself, and coerces himself, and encourages himself; and finally settles down in a peace which unites in one the two discordant elements. I. **THE PSALMIST'S QUESTION TO HIS SOUL.** "Why art thou cast down? why art thou disquieted?" There are two things here, apparently, opposite to each other, and yet both of them present in the fluctuating and stormy emotions of the poet. On the one hand is deep dejection. The word employed describes the attitude of a man lying prone and prostrate, grovelling on the ground. "Why art thou cast down?" And yet, side by side with that torpid dejection, there is a noisy restlessness. "Why dost thou mourn and mutter"—as the words might be rendered—"within me?" And these two moods are, if not co-existent, at least so quickly alternating within his consciousness that he has to reason with himself about both. He has fits of deep depression, followed by, and sometimes even accompanied with, fits of restless complaining and murmuring. And he puts to himself the question, "What is it all about?" Now, if we translate this ques-



tion into a general expression it just comes to this—A man is worth very little unless there is a tribunal in him to which he brings up his feelings and makes them justify their existence, and tell him what they mean by their noise and their complaining. "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls." The affections, the emotions, the feelings of sorrow or of gladness, of dissatisfaction with my lot, or of enjoyment and complacency in it, are excited by the mere presence of a set of external circumstances; but the fact that they are excited is no warrant for their existence. And the first thing to be done in regard to them is to see to it that the nobler man, the man within, the real self should cross-question that other self, and say, "Tell me, have you reason for your being? If not, take yourselves away." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" II. THE PSALMIST'S CHARGE TO HIS SOUL. "Hope thou in God." Ah! it is no use to say to a soul, "What is all your agitation about?" unless you can go on to say, "Be quiet in God." Sweep away the things seen and temporal, and put the thing, or rather the Person, Unseen and Eternal, in the front of them. And then comes quiet; and then there comes aspiration. Then energy comes back to the languid and relaxed limbs, and the man that was lying on his face in the dust starts to his feet, ready for strenuous effort and for noble service. The soul that is to be quickened from its torpor, and to be quieted from its restlessness, must be led to God, and, grasping Him, then it is able to coerce these other feelings, which, apart from Him, have, and ought to have, the field to themselves. Nor must we forget another thought that this charge of the psalmist to his soul teaches us. The deep-seated and central faith in God which marks a religious man ought to permeate all his nature to the very outskirts and circumference of his being. Even amidst the perturbations of the sensitive nature of the poet-psalmist, his inmost self was resting upon God. III. THE PSALMIST'S CONFIDENT ASSURANCE, which is his reason for exhorting his lower self to quiet faith and hope. "For I shall yet praise Him," etc. The "I" here is the whole united and harmonized self, in which the emotions, affections, passions and lower desires obey the reins and whip of the higher nature. When God governs the spirit, the spirit governs the "soul," and the man who has yielded himself to God, first of all in the surrender, possesses himself, and can truly say "I." Only when the heart is "united to fear God's name" is there true concord within. Oh to live more continually under the influence of that glorious light of the assured future, when our lips shall be loosed to give forth His praise, and when we shall have learned that every sorrow, disappointment, loss, painful effort, all that here seemed kindred with darkness, was really but a modification of light, and was a thing to be thankful for. If only we chose to walk in the light of the future, then the poor present would be small and powerless to harm us. "I shall yet praise Him" is the language that befits us all. And there is not only the assurance of a future that shall explain all, and make it all material for praise, when all the discords of the great conflicting piece of music are resolved into harmony, but there is here also the deep sense of present blessing. "I shall yet praise Him who is the health" (or salvation) "of my countenance and my God." "Who is," not who will be; "who is" in the moment of difficulty and sorrow; "who is," even whilst as the other part of the psalm tells us, the enemy are saying "Where is thy God?" "who is," even whilst the sense and flesh and the lower self have lost sight of Him. "And my God." Ah! there we touch the bottom and get our feet upon the rock. He that can say "He is my God" has a right to be sure that he will yet praise Him. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The psalmist's remonstrance with his soul*.—I. MOODS AND EMOTIONS SHOULD BE EXAMINED AND GOVERNED BY A HIGHER SELF. There are plenty of people who, making profession of being Christians, do not habitually put the break on their moods and tempers, and who seem to think that it is a sufficient vindication of gloom and sadness to say that things are going badly with them in the outer world, and who act as if they supposed that no joy can be too exuberant and no elation too lofty if, on the other hand, things are going rightly. It is a miserable travesty of the Christian faith to suppose that its prime purpose is anything else than to put into our hands the power of ruling ourselves because we let Christ rule us. If the wheelhouse, and the steering gear, and the rudder of the ship proclaim their purpose of guidance and direction, as eloquently and unmistakably does the make of our inward selves tell us that emotions and moods and tempers are meant to be governed, often to be crushed, always to be moderated by sovereign will and reason. In the psalmist's language, "my soul" has to give account of its tremors and flutterings

to "Me," the ruling Self, who should be Lord of temperament and control the fluctuations of feeling. II. THERE ARE TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT CAUSES OF DEJECTION AND DISQUIET. There is a court of appeal in each man which tests and tries his reasons for his moods; and these, which look very sufficient to the flesh, turn out to be very insufficient when investigated and tested by the higher spirit or self. We should "appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober." If men would only bring the causes or occasions of the tempers and feelings which they allow to direct them, to the bar of common sense, to say nothing of religious faith, half the furious boilings in their hearts would stop their ebullition. It would be like pouring cold water into a kettle on the fire. It would end its bubbling. Everything has two handles. The aspect of any event depends largely on the beholder's point of view. "There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." III. NO REASONS FOR BEING CAST DOWN ARE SO STRONG AS THOSE FOR ELATION AND CALM HOPE. Try to realize what God is to yourselves—"My God" and "the health of my countenance." That will stimulate sluggish feeling; that will calm disturbed emotion. He that can say, "My God!" and in that possession can repose, will not be easily moved by the trivialities and transitorinesses of this life, to excessive disquiet, whether of the exuberant or of the woeful sort. There is a wonderful calming power in realizing our possession of God as our portion—not stagnating, but quieting. IV. THE EFFORT TO LAY HOLD ON THE TRUTH WHICH CALMS IS TO BE REPEATED IN SPITE OF FAILURES. No effort at tranquillizing our hearts is wholly lost; and no attempt to lay hold upon God is wholly in vain. Men build a dam to keep out the sea, and the winter storms make a breach in it, but it is not washed away altogether. And next season they will not need to begin to build from quite so low down, but there will be a bit of the former left to put the new structure upon. And so by degrees it will rise above the tide, and at last will keep it out. Did you ever see a child upon a swing, or a gymnast upon a trapeze? Each oscillation goes a little higher; each starts from the same lowest point, but the elevation on either side increases with each renewed effort, until at last the destined height is reached and the daring athlete leaps on to a solid platform. So we may, if I might so say, by degrees, by reiterated efforts, swing ourselves up to that steadfast floor on which we may stand high above all that breeds agitation and gloom. (*Ibid.*) *Hope, the antidote to despondency*.—I. THE STATE ALLUDED TO. Dejection and despair. Many things conduce to it. 1. There are not only the difficulties of the Christian course—its dangers, trials, sorrows, disappointments, etc., but—2. There are the frailties and the circumstances of material life. (1) Some are cast down owing to constitutional physical temperament. This tendency might and ought to be checked and overcome by cherishing an opposite state of mind. (2) Others are cast down by the reflections on human existence, the failure of the right, and triumph of wrong—the utter abandonment of the world, the almost imperceptible progress of the Gospel in the world. (3) Others, again, are dispirited by failure of health and the crushing hand of affliction, by domestic trials, ill-assorted marriages, and invincible sorrow. II. THE INVESTIGATION SUGGESTED. It is very advisable and useful to act as the psalmist did, and institute the inquiry as to the reason of our despondence. Most of the troubles of life and religion come in an unreasoning manner, inasmuch as they appeal to our feelings, not to our logic—our hearts and not our heads. But when we bring a little logic into our feelings and sentiments, it acts as a wholesome regulation and useful restraint. We should generally find that in the dealings of Providence there is no cause whatever for the soul to be cast down. Not one moment of trial but what is necessary for the soul's discipline, and shall minister to the soul's best condition. III. THE ANTIDOTE SUPPLIED—"Hope thou in God." Yes, it is the want of faith that is at the root of all fearful despair, and faith, trust and hope are the remedy, the cure of the soul's disease and spirit's gloom. Just think what it is to hope in God! There is everything to make us do so! He has all the resources of the universe at His control. But the keynote of hope is love. If we realize that He loves us, we shall know that He will use all these resources for our good. Perfect love casteth out fear. (*Homilist.*) *The defeat of Despair*.—Mr. Greatheart, old Honest and the four young men went up to Doubting Castle to look for Giant Despair. When they came at the castle gate, they knocked for entrance with an unusual noise. At that the old giant comes to the gate; and Diffidence his wife follows. . . . Then these six men made up to him, and beset him behind and before; also, when Diffidence the giantess came up to help him, old Mr. Honest cut her down at one blow. Then they fought for their

lives, and Giant Despair was brought down to the ground, but was very loath to die. He struggled hard, and had, as they say, as many lives as a cat; but Great-heart was his death, for he left him not till he had severed his head from his shoulders. (*J. Bunyan.*)

## PSALM XLIV.

**VERS. 1-26. We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what work Thou didst.**—*Aspects of national piety:*—There is such a thing as national piety. I mean the aggregation of genuine godly thought, sympathy and aspiration, whether found in the breast of paupers or princes. Here we have it represented—I. As ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL KINDNESS TO THE NATION IN THE PAST (Vers. 1-8). 1. The certain assurance of it. We have heard it as an historical fact—heard it from our own fathers, who would not deceive us, and who told it to us in love. God's merciful interpositions on behalf of the Hebrew people are recorded, not only in the annals of the chosen people, but in the progress of the human race, not only in documents and monuments, but through an institution as divine as nature, as old as the race, viz. parental teaching. 2. The striking manifestations of it. "How Thou didst drive out the heathen," etc. It is not our armies and navies that have saved us and made us what we are, but God. 3. The practical influence of it. (1) Loyalty towards God. (2) Confidence in God. II. As DEPLOING GOD'S PRESENT APPARENT DISPLEASURE TOWARD THE NATION (vers. 9-16). He saw his country—1. Defeated. "But Thou hast cast off," etc. We struggle, but succeed not; there is no victory for us; we are foiled in all our efforts. 2. Victimized. "They which hate us," etc. We are made use of by our enemies. 3. Enslaved. "Thou sellest Thy people for nought," etc. 4. Confounded. "My confusion is continually before me," etc. I am ashamed and bewildered. We have lost our dignity and self-command. 5. Scorned. "Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours," etc. III. As AVOWING FIDELITY TO GOD NOTWITHSTANDING THE CALAMITIES OF THE COUNTRY. 1. A consciousness of fidelity to Heaven. "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten Thee," etc. 2. Persecution on account of their fidelity. "For Thy sake are we killed," etc. (1) Genuine piety may co-exist with great suffering. Abraham, David, Job, Paul. (2) Genuine piety may be stimulated by great suffering. (3) Genuine piety enables one to bear great suffering. IV. As INVOKING GOD'S INTERPOSITION IN ORDER TO RESTORE PAST PRIVILEGES. 1. A humanification of Deity. "Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord?" No creature can have a complete conception of the Absolute. 2. Utter prostration of being. "Our soul is bowed down to the dust," etc. What stronger expression could there be of depression and degradation than this? In a moral sense all men are thus debased and crushed by sin. 3. Entire dependence on sovereign mercy. "Arise for our help," etc. We cannot redeem ourselves, nor can we plead our own merits or excellences as a reason for Thy interposition. (*Homilist.*) *God's doings of old:*—I. DWELLING ON THE HISTORY OF THE PAST THROWS LIGHT ON THE DOINGS OF THE PRESENT. 1. We learn the principle of development. Men are taught that all our present privileges in knowledge, science, civilization and religion came from very small sources. We know that God performed wonders of old, but we also know that those wonders have been continuously progressive. 2. We learn the principle of equalization. If God has done great things for us, He did great things for those of old. They may not have had the full revelation of religion, but they had to exercise faith in the same way as we do. 3. We learn the lesson of common depravity. The people of old did not notice God's works at the time they were wrought. And so we all allow mercies to come to us unheeded and unpraised, and not till they are taken away do we appreciate their worth. II. DWELLING ON THE HISTORY OF THE PAST THROWS LIGHT UPON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. He is a God who changes not and who never deserts His people. III. DWELLING ON THE HISTORY OF THE PAST THROWS LIGHT UPON OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. What God has been He will always be. (*Ibid.*) *Early Israel, the Lord's host:*—

The spirit evinced in these words is very different from that which is regarded by some as the special excellency of modern times. It is supposed to be the height of wisdom now to laugh at what our father said, and to show what utter fools they were in comparison with their supremely wise and enlightened sons. Instead of our fathers "being the men, and wisdom dying with them," we are the men, and wisdom was non-existent until we appeared. Now, I venture to say that our fathers never did or said anything more silly than the modern extravagance I have now described. We blame the Jews for thinking that God's love stopped with them, and then we coolly declare that God's wisdom began with us. Of the two, the Jew had the greater excuse for his one-sidedness. Our text clearly introduces us to the time of Joshua, when Israel invaded the land of the Canaanites avowedly by a Divine commission, and destroyed its inhabitants in the name of the Lord. I. Now THEY REALLY HAD A DIVINE COMMISSION TO DO THIS, OR THEY HAD NOT. The very plausible objection is based upon a comparison of tribal histories in primitive times. There is no need to deny the presence of important analogies between the history of Israel and that of other tribes, for the special mission of Israel did not make it cease to be human in its history. But its subsequent history is sufficient to show that it occupied a position of pre-eminence from the beginning as the "chosen of God." However rudely it may have conceived its mission, to deny its special mission at the commencement of that history is to make its subsequent development unintelligible, and to declare that its life was false at its very foundation. Next, it is objected that Israel could not have received such a mandate from God, seeing that it was immoral to engage in such aggressive wars. But such an objection as this is pure assumption, and fails to take account of different moral conditions and necessities. It is further urged that the cruelties sometimes practised by Israel upon the conquered are morally indefensible. This may be perfectly true, but it is not relevant as an objection. The abuse of a commission does not prove the denial of its reality. II. The continuity of their mission is seen further in THE POWER IN WHICH THEY TRUSTED. Israel very significantly distinguished at the very first between the might of its army and the might of its God. This was very important, for it contained the germ of all further development. This distinction between God and physical force makes God definitely ethical. It was this God that gave Israel a mission. No doubt there were many crudenesses in it. It was but as the grey dawn, and was separated by many a stage from the perfect day. But whatever the form of the mission, it was such as was necessary for the time, and was distinctly ethical in spirit. The God they served and in whom they trusted is the eternal God, that liveth and abideth for ever. III. In perfect harmony with these characteristics was THEIR BELIEF IN THEIR DIVINE ELECTION. "Because Thou hadst a favour unto them." It is important to note that this election, though insisted upon with great emphasis, was ethically conceived. Everything in the religious thought of Israel was necessarily related to its essential conception of God as an ethical Being. Hence the true faith of Israel affords no prototype of later conceptions of arbitrary and non-ethical election and rejection. The true prototype of these is found in corruptions and perversions of Israel's true faith. We must point out further that Israel's election, as truly conceived, simply imposed upon Israel a special task and mission, and issued no decree of exclusion upon the rest of the world. Putting it generally and tersely we may say that God's elections do not involve exclusions. The man of God's choice, who is called to make known in his life the thought and life of God is so far exclusive that he makes war against sin in such a form as is suitable to the age in which he lives, but the final object of his mission is to lead others to share his life and spirit, and to enter into his heritage. This the prophets clearly perceived to be the true purpose of Israel's election (Isa. lx. 3). (*John Thomas, M.A.*) *Lessons from the past*:—This verse, slightly altered in form though not in sense, occupies a prominent place in the Church Litany. It is not a prayer at all: it does not form one of that long series of supplications of which the Litany consists. The origin of the Litany is very interesting. It is a most perfect and beautiful sample of a large class of devotions which in earlier ages abounded in the Church, and which seem to have taken their rise in those dark and anxious days which accompanied and followed upon the break-up of the Roman Empire. There, "battle, murder and sudden death"; "plague, pestilence and famine," and all the calamities attendant on what seemed to be the entire collapse of social order, were common things. Hence, when the misery of the people seemed likely to bring in its train the withdrawal of such small blessings

as they had, and even, in some cases, the fierce ungodliness of despair; then it was that, in their agony, holy souls turned towards God and sought to enkindle the souls around them by the sharp, prominate ejaculations, such as men might spontaneously utter amid the ruins of a falling world. Our Litany was drafted at the time of the Reformation from earlier compositions of this kind, and it maintains its supplicatory character throughout with a simple and emphatic exception. Between the two solemn adjurations to God to "arise and help," there comes in the verse of the psalm, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers," etc. It is an appeal, if we may reverently say so, to the historic consistency of God. It is an act of acknowledgment and praise, and we find the reason for its occurrence in the Litany in the drift and history of the psalm from which it is taken. This psalm was written, probably, at a time and under circumstances not unlike those which some centuries later created the Litanies of the Christian Church. It probably belongs to those dark times which immediately preceded the great and final catastrophe of the Babylonish Captivity. We live over those times, as nowhere else in Holy Scripture, in the pages of Jeremiah. Everything was pointing to some coming disaster: there was failure abroad, there was misery at home. At such times the hearts of thoughtful and religious men turned back upon the past of Israel and upon all that God had done for Israel. Was He not the same God? Was not Israel the same people? Would He be, could He be, inconsistent with Himself? Surely it was enough to remind Him of His mercies in the past to be certain that the future would in some way not be unprovided for. "O God, we have heard with our ears," etc. Now, since human history is a record of the way and will of God, we may explain why it is that so large a portion of the Bible is made up of history. It has a distinctly religious use as showing how God works and what He is. There are two main reasons which practically make history so precious at all times, and especially in times of public or private anxiety, and the first is, that it takes us out of the present, takes us out of ourselves. We are taken out of the clouded and fluctuating present, and how can we better learn than from experience, if the judgment be undisturbed? It is also a record of the unalterable character of human nature, and it places us face to face with the infinite and eternal God. "I am Jehovah, and change not." Now, to apply this, there are three departments of human life in which this recurrence to the past is of great religious value. I. **THE FAMILY.** Every family has its traditions as well as its hopes. We see it in the families of the wealthy and powerful, amid nobles and princes. To be the descendant from great and illustrious families is to inherit a past of which every educated man feels the magnificence and the power. And it is not less true of the humble and undistinguished lives which belong to most of us. When a boy is told that some generations ago one of his ancestors did something noble and generous; when he is told that, but for the misconduct of such and such a member of the family, he and his would be in a very different position now; and when he is bidden imitate that which was noble, and shun that which was bad in them who went before him, he is brought in this way under the play of very powerful motives, and which cannot but have much influence over him. They are part of the predestined discipline, depend upon it, to which God subjects him, and a very valuable part too. II. **THERE IS OUR COUNTRY.** And here we have to remember that God shapes the destiny of every nation as surely as He did that of Judah and Israel. It should be part of every young Englishman's education to trace God's hand in the annals of his country until he can with sincerity and fervour exclaim, "O God, we have heard with our ears," etc. And then there is—III. **THE GREAT AND SACRED HOME OF SOULS—THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.** And all this has to do with personal religion, for it is the religious use of history which enables us better to do our duty in home, in nation and in the Church, and it makes history itself full of interest and encouragement. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The story of God's mighty acts:*—No stories stick by us so long as those that we hear in our childhood, notwithstanding that so many of them are idle, vain and fabulous. But amongst the early Christians and the old believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now. Abraham would, no doubt, talk to young children about the flood, and the Israelites who had been in bondage in Egypt would tell their children about that, and how the Lord delivered them. In primitive Christianity it was the custom of parents to tell their children the story of Jesus, and so it was among our Puritanic ancestors. The old Dutch tiles were the lesson-books in Bible history of many beside Doddridge. The writer of this psalm seems to have had told him by his father

the story of the wondrous things God had done in the days of old. Let us now recall such things, and speak—I. OF THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS. God has, at times, done very mighty acts at which men have been exceedingly amazed. See the history of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Canaan; of Sennacherib and many more. And in the New Testament, of Pentecost and of all the triumphs of the Gospel told of there. And since those days in the history of the Church, of Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin and others not a few. And nearer to our own times, of Wesley, Whitfield and the Methodists. Now, in all these works of old there were these features—1. They were sudden. The old stagers in our churches think that things must grow gently, by degrees. But all God's works have been sudden. At Pentecost. At the Reformation. In Whitfield's day. And so in all revivals. 2. God's instruments have been insignificant. See little David when he slew Goliath; a woman slew Sisera. And also were Luther, Whitfield and the rest. 3. And all these works were attended with much prayer. II. THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOUR. People say, "Oh, times are different now." But has God changed? Cannot He do now what He did of old? III. THE PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD'S MIGHTY DEEDS. 1. There should be gratitude and praise. 2. Prayer. For how many are still unsaved. Preaching will not alone save them. God has done much in answer to prayer. 3. Entire dependence upon God. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The days of old*:—A frivolous and shallow person once inquired of an old Carthusian monk how he had contrived to get through his life. He replied in the words of another psalm, "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times." That man had found one great secret of hope, and cheerfulness, and moral strength. It is unquestionably an immense gain to be able to get beyond our own little life and the little circle which is round it, and to allow our thoughts and sympathies to work in the wider and freer region of the world's past and present and future. Is it not profoundly melancholy in this world whose history is of such solemn, and indeed painful, interest, to listen to the thing called "conversation" by vast numbers? Education has done so little for vast numbers that if they do not converse about their neighbours, they cannot converse at all. They are simply without topics. It is pre-eminently the result of mental training that we have the power to get away from our own concerns and surroundings, to feel ourselves one with all mankind, to know that they and we are moving forward to the fulfilment of a glorious hope. Here, however, it is that the influence of religion enters in. Reading and writing and arithmetic, essential as they are, have no tendency to enlarge the mind or to widen the mental horizon. But put the Bible into the hands of a child, and at once that child becomes aware of the fact that its little world is but a corner of the great wide world, that its little existence is but a segment of the life of the race. And at once an idea is set before it under an immense variety of aspects which inevitably expands its mind, and by doing this achieves one of the greatest aims of education. The child learns that it is in a very large world, a member of the great human family; it is taught to look back to a past in which God has been wise and good, to look forward to a future in which that wisdom and goodness will be more perfectly justified and unfolded. This habit of considering "the days of old and the years of ancient times" will have two happy results; it will teach humility, and it will calm down anxiety. While we thank God for the light He has vouchsafed in these last days, while we will not lend an ear to the suggestion that knowledge, progress, science, civilization are bad things, we must also disallow the monstrous notion that there was no wisdom in the world until this century. "There were giants in the earth in those days." And as we thus learn modesty, so may we, by considering "the days of old and the years of ancient times" be delivered from unreasoning panic and unbelieving timidity. The faith is attacked; And was it never attacked before? Surely the intellectual shock which men experienced at the Reformation was far more violent than any which is felt now. A hundred years ago there was a more widespread and pestilent scepticism than any we have to lament; yet religion grappled with it, did not simply stand on the defensive, but attacked, and attacked successfully. It seems to me that the robust trust of these old psalms cries shame upon us, who live in a brighter and happier day. For the individual as for the community the ultimate trust must be in the character of God, in His faithfulness most of all. (J. A. Jacob, M.A.) *The eternal providence of God*:—

I. PROVIDENCE IS NOT OF YESTERDAY. Men love what is ancient. Now, this antiquity

of Providence is not a myth. The Psalms are historical. They were written some thousands of years ago, and yet the writers speak of former times of old. II. **THE MAN IS VERY BOLD WHO DISPUTES THIS PROVIDENCE.** He must be either a very great or a very little man; there can be nothing common about him. But he ought to be sworn before he gives evidence. We have a right to know who he is. We cannot have any chatter upon this great question. III. **PROVIDENCE IS A REVELATION:** there is a Gospel of Providence. It is a Gospel to be assured that the foundation of your haven is strong; that all things are under the hand of God. IV. **AND THERE IS A PROVIDENCE OF FACTS.** The men of old abused these, and from a long succession of such observations they drew their conclusions. History seems to make it more difficult to deny than to admit Providence. V. **WHATEVER OBJECTION ANY MAY HAVE AGAINST THE DOCTRINE, ITS EFFECT ON LIFE IS GOOD.** We ask, what kind of man does this belief in Providence produce; what fruit does it bear? The creed which says God is, God rules, God will judge—what manner of man will this creed make? It will give courage. See Moses before Pharaoh. And what blessed peace it imparts. But surely this is a great presumption in favour of its truth. And thus should all theology be tested. What are its effects; how does the theology come out in the life? VI. **THE MIRACULOUS ELEMENT IS NO DIFFICULTY.** For what miracle can exceed the miracle of your own spiritual development? The story of the Red Sea has been true of ourselves, such seas have been before us, and they have opened for us, and we have gone through them as on dry land. And the story of the manna; do we not know all about that? We must read the Bible as having to do with our own life. VII. **PROVIDENCE LEADS UP TO REDEMPTION.** He who takes care of this present life must care for our eternal life. Does God care for oxen; then how much more for man? But if for man's temporal welfare, so that He has provided everything for it, can He have made no provision for the needs of the soul? Impossible! Now, such is our faith to-day. We have come to it not by inheritance but by personal reception of it. We are one of a great band of witnesses that "the Lord reigneth," that all that occurs, whatever it be, is by His ordering and under His control. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right hand and Thine arm and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them.—God the source of all success:**—The subject of this verse is the conquest of Canaan by Israel. It teaches that—I. **THE CO-OPERATION OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF ALL RIGHT WORK.** See this in husbandry; in the spread of the Gospel. II. **THE SPIRIT OF TRUE GODLINESS WILL EVER BE READY TO OWN THIS.** III. **SUCH RECOGNITION HELPS OUR OWN SUCCESS.** Praise, like prayer, helps us as it honours God. Our success in all good work depends partly on using our own sword, upon using our arm and making it bare; but it equally depends on our trusting in neither. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in," etc. Apply the text retrospectively to all success we have had; prospectively to all we hope for, and let us rely upon God's love, for without that we have no strong confidence. (*S. Martin, M.A.*)

**Vers. 5-8. Through Thee will we push down our enemies; through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.—God's gift of victory:**—1. The believer may promise to himself whatsoever God hath promised unto him; hath God promised to give His own people the victory over their enemies? then the believer may promise to himself he shall overcome his persecutors, and through God's strength be more than a conqueror over them; "Through Thee will we push down our enemies." If the enemy make head against them after a defeat, the believer may say, "Through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." 2. The less confidence we have in ourselves or in anything beside God, the more evidence have we of the sincerity of our faith in God: "For I will not trust in my bow," etc. 3. It is a proof of sincerity of faith to give God as much credit for time to come, as He hath gained to Himself, by the evidencing of His truth in time bygone. 4. Whosoever doth hate the Lord's people shall be forced to think shame of their enmity one day; "Thou hast put them to shame that hated us." 5. The glory which we give to God in prosperity we should give Him the same in our adversity; change of times and dispensations should not change His glory, nor our confidence in Him. Though the Church be under foot of men, the Church's God is above all. "In God will we boast," etc. (*D. Dickson.*) **The better confidence:**—George III. was one day looking at the

plate which had been recently brought from Hanover, and observing one of the articles with engraved arms upon it, he said to the domestic who attended him, "This belonged to King George II.; I know it by the Latin inscription—'I trust in my sword.' This," said he, "I always disliked; for had I nothing to trust in but my sword, I well know what would be the result; therefore, when I came to the crown, I altered it. My motto is, 'I trust in the truth of the Christian religion.'" He then, with his usual condescension, said, "Which of the two inscriptions do you like best?" The attendant replied, "Your Majesty's is infinitely preferable to the other." He said, "I have ever thought so, and ever shall think so, for therein is my trust and confidence."

### PSALM XLV.

**VERS. 1-17. My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the king.**—*The song of the heavenly nuptials*:—In accordance with unbroken tradition of the Church from the beginning, we interpret this as a spiritual epithalamium or nuptial-song, in honour of the wondrous espousals whereby Christ the Son of God takes into most real, intimate, blissful and everlasting union and fellowship with Himself the Church of ransomed, regenerate, believing souls. I. **THE BRIDEGROOM** (vers. 1-9). 1. In His present qualities. (1) Comeliness of countenance (Cant. v. 10-16). (2) Gracefulness of speech. He was, indeed, in highest sense, "master of sentences"—possessor of noble and powerful gift of eloquence, which He employed in commending the true, the holy, the blissful, impressing on their attention and reception what was for health and joy to them now and for ever. 2. In His warlike preparations and achievements. Peace and goodwill, benign, never-ending fellowship for all who choose to be loyal subjects of the King of kings, and faithful followers of "truth and meekness and righteousness"; but war to the death, wounds unto death in which there is no dying, unto all who persist in wicked hostility and revolt. 3. In His kingly administration. He is God, and He became man; and it is properly in respect of His manhood—His Mediatorship especially on the side of His manhood, that we are to think of the sovereignty here spoken of as exercised. From the beginning and all through there were glimmerings, recognized and confessed, of the hidden majesty. (1) The duration of His sovereignty. "For ever and ever;" what contrast to earthly kings and human dynasties! (2) Its character. "A right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness," etc. (3) The personal reward which was to crown and consummate His administration. "Anointed Thee with the oil of gladness," etc. 4. In His nuptial splendour (vers. 8, 9). Ivory palaces, resounding with strains of grandest music, and filled with fragrance of choicest perfumes; a queenly bride in gold embroideries, with retinue of princely virgins; and, centre of all, the Bridegroom—Immanuel, showing perfection of beauty, renown of heroism, splendour of royalty, yea, of Divine majesty, associated with all gaiety and gladness of nuptial festivity. And where and when becomes it realized? Up yonder on the other side of the resurrection. II. **THE BRIDE** (vers. 10-15). 1. The present summons (vers. 10-12). And what have we here in the pure spiritual reality—stripped of allegorical drapery, but the substance of all genuine evangelical teaching? What is to be the central scope and aim of all pastoral labour and pulpit ministration and sanctuary ordinance and more private Christian effort but to win souls, one by one, and in collective multitude as well, from other and alien relationship unto Christ, ever more truly and nearly unto Christ? 2. The call itself. The manner of the utterance breathes the spirit of urgent solicitation, with undertone, as our ear catches it, of authoritative command; blending of majesty and grace such as is reflected in the entire range of Gospel overture and offer. And what, then, means the summons in its plain and direct application to us? It means "conversion"—the turning round of the soul, in respect of bent and aim, from course original and natural into channel that is new—transference of affection and aspiration from the sphere of the carnal into that of the holy, the heavenly, the divine. 3. The reasons which go to support the summons. He by



whom or for whom it is given has—(1) The authority to command compliance. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." (2) The bounty—the resources and the readiness—to reward compliance. There is reward of affection direct from Himself; and there are droppings of bounty, tokens of regard, through creature instrumentalities. (3) The excellence to deserve compliance. 4. What is spoken of the Bride (vers. 13-15). III. MESSIAH'S OFFSPRING AND RENOWN (vers. 16, 17). 1. Declaration concerning offspring to Messiah—fruit of the espousals (ver. 16). In ordinary earthly households you look to find a family likeness. So it is in the spiritual household. Resemblance, first of all, to remoter ancestry—to the "fathers," the fleshly ancestry of Immanuel, the prime and chief of these: on just such principle has an apostle hung before us a grand gallery of these in the eleventh of Hebrews. But likeness especially to the immediate common parent; and so that fine old picture-gallery takes us on to this for last halting-place and life-pattern—"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The more that there can be seen in you, not an affected imitation, but a genuine embodiment of all that Christ was; the more that His humility, and gentleness, and purity, and integrity, and devoutness, and whatever else went to constitute His perfection of excellence, become radiant in your character, grow to be a very fragrance cleaving to you and diffusing itself from you around, the more claim have you to rank among the "children" whom He is to "set for princes in the earth." 2. Prediction to Himself of eternal renown (ver. 17). (1) Purpose of spreading and perpetuating the renown. Can you be too prompt, too eager, too constant, in the showing forth of His praise? (2) Assured prospect of responding praise. (*D. McLean.*) *A unique king*:—Although it cannot be proved that such a king as represented in this psalm ever existed in fact, it is obvious that he existed in the conception of the poetic author. I. His ideal conception of his king STIRRED HIS SOUL. 1. An idea that appears good to a man carries with it a power to move the affections. "My heart bubbleth up." What the mind sees clearly the heart must ever feel more or less deeply. There is a King—Jesus of Nazareth—true ideas concerning whom are "a good matter" that will break up the fountains of the heart, and make all the affections like a well of water spring up to everlasting life. 2. When the affections are properly moved there will be a freeness and aptness of utterance. "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." Charge a man's soul with true emotions and he will grow eloquent. II. His conception of his king CORRESPONDS WITH NO KNOWN HISTORIC CHARACTER. Not in Egypt, Judæa, Persia, Rome or Europe has a king appeared answering to our poet's conception. Man has the power of conceiving better things than he has ever seen, better characters than have ever appeared. A glorious power this! 1. It is a proof of the Divine within us. 2. It is an incentive to moral progress. III. His conception of his king APPROACHES THE DIVINE TYPE. 1. His appearance was beautiful. 2. His campaign was moral. 3. His rule was righteous. 4. His character was true. 5. His patron was God. 6. His influences were delightful. 7. His associations were magnificent. 8. His fame was enduring. IV. His conception of his king was not EQUAL TO THE CHARACTER OF KING JESUS. (*Homilist.*) *The things concerning Zion's King, good matters to all His true subjects*:—I. THE KING. 1. Jesus Christ is a King. (1) He is expressly so called by the Father (Ps. ii. 6; Micah v. 2). (2) Jesus affirms this concerning Himself (John xviii. 37). (3) All true believers own and acknowledge Him to be a King, and their King in particular (Isa. xxxiii. 22; John i. 49). (4) He was set forth to the Church by the prophets as a King (Gen. xlix. 10). Also by type—David, Solomon, Melchisedec, etc. (5) Kingly titles and epithets are given Him in Scripture. Prince of peace; blessed and only Potentate; King of kings and Lord of lords (Phil. ii. 11). (6) Kingly prerogatives and badges of royalty are ascribed to Him (Psa. lxxxix. 20; Cant. iii. 11; Ps. lxxv. 1; Eph. iii. 8). 2. Jesus Christ is the King by way of eminence and excellency. (1) He is so in respect of His person (Isa. ix. 6). (2) He is a most ancient King (Micah v. 2). (3) He is most singularly qualified for the management of His Kingdom (Col. ii. 3; Matt. xxviii. 18). (4) He is a most righteous King; He governs both His essential and mediatorial kingdoms with the strictest justice and equity (Isa. xxxii. 1; Ps. xlv. 7; Isa. xi. 5). (5) He is a most rich and opulent King (John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Matt. xi. 27; Eph. iii. 8). (6) He is a singularly blessed and happy King (1 Tim. vi. 15; Ps. xxi. 6). (7) Zion's King is immortal, and therefore eternal (1 Tim. i. 17; Rev. i. 18). (8) He is a most gracious, loving and affectionate King (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). (9) He is a most glorious King, yea, "the King of glory." Heaven and eternal glory is a purchased possession.

sion (Eph. i. 14), and He is the purchaser. He is the preparer of glory for all His true subjects (John xiv. 2). He is the bestower of glory upon all the heirs of promise (Luke xxii. 29). II. **SOME THINGS WHICH CONCERN THE KING, AND ARE GOOD MATTERS IN THE ESTEEM OF HIS PEOPLE.** 1. The glory and excellency of the King's person is a matter much set by in the esteem of all His true subjects (1 Cor. ii. 2; Phil. iii. 10; John i. 14; Ps. lxxiii. 25). 2. The love of Christ; the love of a three-one God in Him, is truly a good matter to believers. Their life lies in His favour, and His lovingkindness is better than life. 3. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus is a good matter to believers. 4. The fulness of Christ is a good matter to believers (Col. i. 9; John i. 14; 1 Cor. i. 30; John xvii. 2; Col. ii. 10). 5. The prosperity and success of His kingdom is a good matter to all His true subjects. 6. All His commandments are good matters to His people (Ps. cxix. 32). 7. The very cross of Christ; all the tribulations and calamities which they are at any time called to endure for His name's sake are accounted good matters by His true followers (Acts v. 41; Heb. xi. 26). 8. What the King Himself is to His people, what He has done for them, what He has wrought in them, and what they yet expect from Him, are all good matters in their esteem. His true subjects have already received abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (Rom. v. 17). And shall reign in life by Jesus Christ. III. **WHENCE IT IS THAT THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KING ARE VIEWED, AS MATTERS TRULY GOOD, BY ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.** 1. Because of the great love and regard believers have for the King Himself. 2. Because there is a real worth and excellency in all the things which concern this glorious King. They are suited to give satisfaction to the soul (Cant. ii. 3; Ps. xxxvi. 7). 3. Because believers have eyes to discern the value and excellency of divine things (Matt. xiii. 16; xvi. 17). 4. Because the King Himself is theirs, and they are His (Cant. ii. 16). IV. **USE.** 1. Of information. (1) See from this subject the amazing condescension of the great God our Saviour, in submitting to exercise a variety of offices for the spiritual good and advantage of perishing sinners. (2) See one special difference between the true believer and the hypocrite. Hypocrites may assent to the truth of many things taught in the Word concerning Christ; but they have no love to His person, nor can they have any heart-affection to things touching Him. (3) See suitable exercise for the children and people of God. It is to meditate much upon Christ, His person, offices, grace and fulness; particularly they should give themselves much to meditation upon His kingly office; the glory of His kingdom, with the justice and equity of His government. (4) See when it is persons can speak suitably concerning Christ and the things of Christ. When their hearts are in some measure filled with His grace. (5) See matter of terror to all the enemies of Zion's King. Who are Christ's enemies? All in a natural state and condition are His enemies; yea, the carnal mind is enmity against Him in the very abstract (Rom. viii. 7). 2. Of trial and examination. (1) What views have you got of your natural state and condition? Have you seen it to be a state of sin, captivity and bondage? (2) Did ever this glorious King reveal His powerful arm to you, thereby making you heartily willing to renounce your own, and submit to His righteousness? (Isa. xlv. 24). And are you willing to be indebted to Him, not only for righteousness as the ground of your justification and acceptance before God, but likewise to deny yourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him? (3) Do you love Christ? Can you say to Himself, Thou knowest that I love Thee? (4) Do you love your fellow-subjects? (1 John iii. 14). (5) Have you a prevailing desire and concern for the success and prosperity of God's work in the Church? (Isa. lxii. 6, 7). (6) Is the opposition that still remains in your own hearts to this glorious King, with the many dishonours done Him in the world about you, matter of grief and sorrow to you? (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22). 3. Of exhortation. (1) To the true subjects of Christ. (2) Bless God for sending His Son into the world to be your King, and determining your hearts to accept of Him by faith as made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, etc. Trust in your glorious King; this is your duty at all times, and in every circumstance (Ps. lxxii. 8). (3) Be glad and rejoice in your King—in His love, wisdom, power, faithfulness, all-sufficiency and immutability. (4) Be concerned to grow in acquaintance with your King (2 Pet. iii. 18). (5) Seek to have the declarative glory of your King advanced in your day and generation. We exhort all the enemies of this glorious King to relinquish the camp of Satan and come over to Christ's standard. While you refuse to submit to His righteousness, you are in a state of the vilest slavery and bondage (Eph. ii. 3). Our Lord Jesus, the King, is your rightful Lord and Sovereign. There is no possible way for you to

escape from the curse of the broken law and the wrath to come but your uniting with Christ by faith. However long you have slighted the offers of His grace, He is still waiting that He may be gracious to you. His sceptre of grace is stretched out, and He invites you to take hold of it. (T. Bennet.) *The conquests of Messiah*.—I. HIS MATCHLESS BEAUTY (ver. 2). 1. A description of His person. We have, indeed, no direct and positive information in regard to His personal appearance. But it is certainly no extravagant supposition that His human form would be rendered as fit as it could be for the indwelling of the celestial inhabitant. And it is no unwarrantable supposition that perfect truth, benevolence and purity should depict themselves on the countenance of the Redeemer—as they will be manifested in the aspect wherever they exist—and render Him the most beautiful of men; for the expression of these principles and feelings in the countenance constitutes beauty. And it is no improbable supposition that this beauty was marred by His long-continued and inexpressibly deep sorrows, and that He was so worn down and crushed by the sufferings which He endured as scarcely to have retained the aspect of a man. 2. The qualifications with which He was endowed. (1) The gracefulness of His speech. (2) The sweetness and excellence of the truths He declared. 3. The Divine favour with which He was regarded. Our Lord is now in heaven on the ground of His own worthiness. II. HIS GLORIOUS EXPLOITS. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh," etc. The propagation of the Gospel is here referred to. 1. The appellation employed. He is mighty to destroy, as those will be brought to feel against whom His wrath will be kindled; but judgment is His strange work, while it is with unbounded joy that He exclaims, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2. The petition presented. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is evidently intended. And as David said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that"; so can we say with the fullest confidence concerning this heavenly instrument. "For the word of God is quick and powerful," etc. 3. The reasons adduced. (1) The character of the Conqueror. One who is truth itself, who is meek and lowly in heart, and who never has acted, and never will, but in strictest accordance with the principles of perfect rectitude. Blessed Jesus! ride on. (2) The results of His victories. Not merely is He distinguished by truth, and meekness, and righteousness, but He diffuses these blessings wherever He goes. 4. The confidence displayed. "And in Thy majesty ride prosperously," etc. That this confidence was well founded, the early history of the Christian cause abundantly demonstrates. Transformations of the most amazing kind took place; the Church beheld her converts flocking to her from all quarters, and her bitterest enemies became her most devoted friends. (Anon.) *A missionary discourse*.—I. A PREFACE OR INTRODUCTION TO WHAT FOLLOWS. 1. The subject. "A good matter;" "things touching the King." Christ is the king. The things that concern Christ as a King are, the dignity of His person, the wisdom and equity of His government, the extent of His dominions, the happiness of His subjects, and the perpetuity of His reign. This is "good matter." It is illustrative of the character of Him who is essential goodness. The nearer we approximate towards a perfection of goodness, the more this "good matter" will occupy our attention. 2. A source whence it proceeded. "My heart is inditing," boiling or bubbling up, in allusion to water put in motion by the action of fire, or bubbling up from a spring. How the love of Christ will constrain us to speak of Him. 3. A manner of expression. "My tongue is the pen," etc. Many imitate the psalmist in the fluency of their speech; they talk rapidly, but alas! they talk wickedly. Others converse freely and piously; but incoherently, enthusiastically, and erroneously. Let us always think before we speak; and let our words be seasoned with grace that we may minister grace to the hearers. II. A DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER. "Thou art fairer," etc. 1. In His person. There is moral as well as physical beauty. How holy was Christ's soul! What wisdom, love, patience, humility did He possess. 2. In His address. He not only possessed a plenitude of grace for His own support in the arduous work in which He was engaged, but that He might instruct and console others. 3. By the commendation of Jehovah. God hath "blessed," i. e. extolled His Son in the ascriptions of Divine titles, honours and perfections to Him. III. A PETITION ADDRESSED TO THE MESSIAH. 1. The cause He maintains. Not to dethrone monarchs, but to subdue vices. (1) Truth in opposition to error, shadow, prophecy. Christ accomplished and fulfilled all righteousness. (2) Meekness. Worldly warfare is the child of wrath; and fury and malevolence are its inseparable companions. But nothing could surpass the meekness and gentleness of

Christ; and His disciples were to be formed on the same plan: "Learn of me" (Matt. xi. 29). (8) Righteousness. He Himself is the Lord of righteousness; and His laws, requirements, people and kingdom are all righteous. 2. The manner how the psalmist expected the Messiah to achieve His victories. "Gird thy sword," etc. This is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the Gospel of our salvation (Hob. iv. 12; Rev. i. 16). The power of the Gospel surpasses all description (Rom. i. 16; 2 Cor. iv. 7; 1 Thess. i. 5). 3. The interest which the psalmist took in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. He prays, "Gird thy sword," etc. (Ps. xc. 16, 17; cxviii. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1). The same spirit pervades all Christians. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The excellency of Christ:*—The special matter of the psalm is, "A song of loves." This may be so called—1. Because the psalm tells of the love of Christ to His Church, and of her love to Him. Or—2. It may be put in the plural, as is frequent in Hebrew, by way of eminency; so that what is meant is that the love told of is most excellent and incomparable. 3. It may be so called because of the manifold fruits of that one love. But probably the second sense is the one intended here—the mystical spiritual love that is between Christ and the Church is the most excellent love. Therefore, note—I. THIS LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH IN THEIR ESPOUSALS IS MATTER OF GREAT JOY AND REJOICING. 1. To God Himself (Zeph. iii. 17). 2. To Jesus Christ (Cant. iii. 11). 3. To believers themselves (1 Pet. i. 8). And the reason of all this joy is—(1) On the part of God, because He saw the design and purpose of His grace accomplished (Eph. i. 6). (2) It is joy to Christ because He saw of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. This is that He laboured for. As Rachel was to Jacob (Hos. xii. 12). (3) And it is joy to all believers because it institutes them in such new relations and conditions as they never could have looked for (Isa. liv. 5). Let us learn, then, God's infinite wisdom, condescension and goodness in disposing the way of saving poor sinners, so as that it shall be matter of joy and rejoicing to Him, to Jesus Christ and to believers themselves. We were poor, desolate, forlorn, lost creatures; and that God should bring us into a way of saving us, so as that the heart of God and Christ and our own hearts should rejoice in it; this calls for our admiration. Do we find this joy in our own hearts? Shall God rejoice, and Christ rejoice, and not we? II. THERE IS NO LOVE LIKE TO THE LOVE BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS—no, not the flaming love in some to their hearts, and in others to the world that even devour them. But who can tell adequately of the love of Christ? Consider it—1. In its condescension (Philip. ii. 6–8). 2. In His suffering. 3. The care and tenderness which the Lord Jesus continues to manifest towards us now He is in heaven (Heb. v. 2; iv. 15). Then, on the other side, I say the love of believers to Christ is beyond all other love whatsoever. 1. In a way of value (Matt. xiii. 45). They will part with all that they have to obtain Christ. They part with their sin, lust and corruption (Gal. v. 24). Now that love which will carry a man out to deny all ungodliness and to renounce all his own righteousness, to lose all he hath wrought in his own strength, to deny himself upon every instance wherein Christ requires him; this is a transcendent love, above all other love whatsoever. 2. The love of believers manifests itself also in suffering for Christ; and oh, who can tell what the martyrs endured from love to the Lord Jesus? So that this psalm which treats of the espousals of Christ and believers may well have this title, "A song of loves"; it being the most excellent love. Two things from hence are incumbent upon us. (1) To labour to get a sense of this love of Christ upon our hearts. (2) Let us examine ourselves whether we have this transcendent love to Jesus Christ in our hearts. If we have, it will continually keep us up to the mortification of all our sin; and it will make us continually ready for all the service and suffering Christ shall call us unto. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *The excellency of Christ:*—The preface of this psalm is in verse six. The song itself from verse two to the end. First, from the preface we learn that he that lays a good foundation makes a good beginning of what he hath to say. It is from his heart. "My heart," saith he, "is inditing." A sacrifice without a heart, a silly dove that hath no heart, are things that God abhors (Hos. vii. 11). I. THE SUBJECT TREATED OF. 1. In general, that it is a good matter. It is not about vain and empty, much less about wicked things, as the songs of the world are. Nor is it only about true things, for true things may have no goodness in them. 2. What this good matter is. The subject of this song is the King. And it is limited to things concerning Him; as if He had said, it is not for me, it is not for any mortal man to conceive or express all the glories and excellencies of the great King, Jesus Christ; but, saith He, something touch-

ing, something concerning Him. The best we can reach or attain unto in this world is only something touching Christ. We cannot yet behold the King in His glory, we cannot see His uncreated excellencies or beauties, nor those unspeakable glories of His person, natures, and works, as we shall one day contemplate and behold. "I speak," saith he, "of the things I have made"; that is, which I have prepared; I will mention only the things which I have composed concerning Christ. II. There is the MANNER of THEIR DELIVERY, both as to their conception and as to outward expression; their conception it was in his heart; as to the outward delivery, it was by his tongue. And there is a peculiarity in both. It is not an ordinary conception of the heart, it is not a common expression of the tongue. The word refers to the bubbling up of water in a fountain or spring. The heart of the psalmist was so full of these things of Christ, things touching the King, that they did naturally overflow, as water rising out of a spring naturally flows into the stream without any labour or difficulty. It is promised that it shall be thus with them who believe (John iv. 14). "A ready writer" is one able with speed and steadiness to set down any thought or conception whatsoever. And now from the words thus explained let us observe—1. That the things which concern Jesus Christ are a good matter to believers. And their being thus good to them distinguishes the sincere believer from the mere hypocrite. These latter assent to the Gospel as true, but never embrace its teachings as good; they do not cleave unto them as finding a rest, sweetness, excellency and suitableness in them for their own need. But to believers the things of Christ are good. (1) In themselves (Col. i. 18). Whatever is good in any kind, it all centres in Christ. The good things of Christ are God's best things. How, then, can they be otherwise than a good matter? (2) And they are so because believers have received the Spirit whereby they discern the excellency of them. Other men do not see such excellency (Isa. liii. 2). But believers can (1 Cor. ii. 7-10). Let us, for application, inquire, Do we esteem them good things; are they so to us? Can we say as did Paul (Philip. iii. 8)? Is our satisfaction with them so high that we can be satisfied without other things? This I can say, that the nearer some have been to the loving of all things, even life itself, the better Christ hath been unto them. Examine, therefore, yourselves, whether you do not only give a naked assent to the Gospel and the things of Christ; or whether you find a goodness in them, a suitableness and satisfaction in them; that it is a good matter unto you. And let us observe—2. Also, from the words, that it is the duty of believers to be making things concerning Jesus Christ. "Things that I have made touching the King." Now, this is to meditate upon them and upon Christ; this it is which is here called, "The things I have made," composed, framed in my mind. He did not make pictures of Christ, or frame such and such images of Him; but he meditated upon Christ. It is called "beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass" (2 Cor. iii. 18). What is our work and business? Why, it is to behold this glory, that is, to contemplate upon it by faith, to meditate upon it. If I have observed any thing by experience, it is this, a man may take the measure of his growth and decay in grace, according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ's kingdom, and of His love. A heart that is inclined to converse with Christ as He is represented in the Gospel is a thriving heart. And especially should we meditate upon Him in His Kingly offices (Isa. lxiii. 1). When a heart is full of love to Christ it will run over (2 Cor. iv. 13; Acts iv. 20). But what sad evidence there is in men's silence about Him, of their lack of love for Him. Lastly, that profession alone is acceptable to God and useful in the Church, which proceeds from the fulness of the heart. It is no use to be able to speak much if the heart be not full. (*Ibid.*) "A good matter":—"I speak of the things which I have made touching the King." It is not hearsay that I am descanting upon; I am not dealing in second-hand experience. It bubbles up from within me. I am not so much a reservoir or cistern that contains supplies from other sources, but God has caused me through His grace to be as a spring of living water. An ounce of experience is worth a ton of hearsay. Well, now, what is this goodly matter? I. First, it is concerning CHRIST, THE KING HIMSELF—His glorious person, His matchless charms, His ineffable grace. 1. Notice that as soon as we begin to speak of Jesus He appears amongst us. The first verse declares the intention of the psalmist, and he has no sooner declared his purpose than, straightway, faith perceives the subject of the song in the very midst, and love adores. "Thou art fairer than the children of men." Every other man, however good and noble, has, it must be owned, even

by his most ardent admirers, some lack, some fault or blemish; but I challenge Christ's friends or foes to find in Him any fault at all. No one was exposed to such severe tests as He; yet all men confessed that He was the Holy One of God.

2. Next, He is gloriously worthy because of His gracious words. "Grace is poured into thy lips." The people all hung upon Him listening; He riveted their attention when He was here among men. The words that He has left to us, they are spirit, and they are life. They are the words of a King, and where the word of a king is there is power. II. I see Him further on in the chapter ascending His throne and acting as a JUDGE rather than as a King. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre," etc. The idea, if I mistake not, is that this King, though He does not set aside His regal rights, or lay His sceptre by, is virtually on the seat of justice. There He sits, dispensing justice, determining the laws, meting out evenhandedly the justice that is in His heart. Oh think of it, rejoice because of it! That throne is not a mere sham and delusion; it is a throne of justice; He reigns in equity. III. Further on in the chapter I recognize this same King as THE HUSBAND (ver. 9). There is in Jesus what I may call the domestic side of His character. This should touch us very closely. He is our Husband, our Lover, our fellow-Friend. He is our glorious Head, not merely as a mighty Emperor, but as the pledged and espoused Lover of our souls. Come near to Him till your garments catch the perfume of His, and you, too, made glad by the ivory palaces, become redolent of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. You need not flee away from Him. He has not come to crush, and condemn, and doom you; He fights your cause, He loves to save and serve you. Bow at His feet by all means, but you may climb His chariot too, and go forth to fight beneath His shield. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*) *Concerning the King:*—The real meaning is, "I am saying to myself, my works (or my compositions) are about the King." He keeps repeating this to himself, like some one continually reminding himself of good news which he can scarce believe for joy. The privilege he has obtained, the task he is performing, is a glory not to be missed and not to be diminished; so, lest he should flag or fail, or do his work unworthily, he keeps his enthusiasm on fire by constantly repeating, "My works are concerning the King." I. CHOOSE THE HIGHEST IDEAL FOR YOUR LIFE. Remember that the value of your work depends entirely upon the choice of your ideal. To live your life without an aim is to fling it away. The man of pleasure is dead while he lives. Choose a definite ideal in life, and see to it that you choose an ideal worthy of our human estate. Though you scorn the aimlessness of a drifting life, and though energy and resolution and diligence strongly mark your character, yet you may bend all these upon an ideal that will nullify their power and lay their glory in the dust. The ideal you choose for your life is of primary importance; therefore, I pray you, consider it well. The perfect ideal for the lives of all men is found in Christ. His kingship over human character is twofold. He presents the sovereign ideal for character, and He makes the realization of that ideal possible. Follow the vision of His glory until you find it fulfilled in your own life. The greatest moral heroes of history have been Christ's men. II. HAVING CHOSEN YOUR IDEAL, FILL YOUR HEART TO THE BRIM WITH IT. You will have what the psalmist calls "goodly matter" to deal with; therefore make your heart "well up" with it, let the springs gush forth abundantly, fill the fountains to the brim. When an evil thought comes, look straightway for a counteracting thought of good, and let that drive the other out. If another evil thought come, it shows that you have still some vacant space left, so get another holy thought to chase away the new evil. This "welling up" of goodly things in the heart will become increasingly spontaneous. Gradually the "goodly matter" which is stored in the heart will begin to spring up unbidden. The spirit will spontaneously produce celestial forms, and send forth angels even through the gates of dreams. Blessed is the life which has been thus built up into a temple of God and goodness! III. HAVING CHOSEN YOUR IDEAL, AND HAVING BRIMMED THE HEART WITH IT, FLUSH THE LIFE TO THE LIPS WITH IT. The royal theme of the psalmist passed from the overflowing of the heart to the outpouring of the lips. "My tongue," he said, "is the pen of a ready writer." You will find it a great joy to let the lips express what the heart feels. Is it not an hour of delights for the seer when he illuminates the world with the new light that has flashed on his soul? Who can tell the rapture of the poet when his heart pours forth its siren music along the shores of time? Aye, and if you will let your lips and lives tell out without restraint the glory of the King that reigns within you, you shall know a joy as deep as the joy of Heaven. (*J. Thomas, M.A.*) "A gude word" for the

*King*:—There is a sweet story in the "Bonny Brier Bush" about a young Scotch minister who, called upon to preach his first sermon, thrust the clever discourse he had prepared into the fire-grate when he remembered the dying words of his mother, "Oh, laddie, be sure ye say a gude word for Jesus Christ." The "gude word" from his heart brought the critical old Scotch folk to tenderness and tears, and made the kirk a very sanctuary that morning. Let us, wherever we are, and whoever we are, be ready with "a gude word for Jesus Christ." *The glory of Christ partially described*:—The Alps, as a whole, are too extensive and of too varied beauty for any one artist to take into his perspective and paint upon his canvas. The best thing he can do is to portray just one or two of the main features of the scene which are visible from his point of view. It is equally the case respecting the infinite perfections and majestic character of Christ. Christ Himself in His infinite fulness has never yet been preached by mortal tongue. Man's gifts, though surpassing those of the highest order, cannot compass such a theme. It is, however, given unto him out of a full heart to speak of the things which he has made touching the King.

Ver. 2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever.*—*The King in His beauty*:—I. THE PERSON OF THE KING. The old world valued in a king, personal beauty, and graciousness of speech. Both are ascribed here to the King spoken of. We have to think, not of the outward form, howsoever lovely with the loveliness of meekness and transfigured with the refining patience of suffering it may have been, but of the beauty of a soul that was all radiant with a lustre of loveliness that shames the fragmentary and marred virtues of the rest of us, and stands before the world for ever as the supreme type and high-water mark of the glory that is possible to a human spirit. II. HIS WARFARE. He is to put on all His panoply. Thus arrayed, with the weapon by His side and the glittering armour on His limbs, He is called upon to mount His chariot or His warhorse and ride forth. But for what? "On behalf of truth, meekness, righteousness." If He be a warrior these are the purposes for which the true King of men must draw His sword, and these only. No vulgar ambition nor cruel lust of conquest, earth-hunger or "glory" actuates Him. Nothing but the spread through the world of the gracious beauties which are His own can be the end of the King's warfare. In two or three swift touches the psalmist next paints the tumult and hurry of the fight. "Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things." There are no armies or allies, none to stand beside Him. The one mighty figure of the kingly warrior stands forth, as in the Assyrian sculptures of conquerors, erect and alone in His chariot, crashing through the ranks of the enemy, and owing victory to His own strong arm alone. Put side by side with this the picture of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. And yet that lowly procession of the Christ, with tears upon His cheeks, is part fulfilment of this glorious prediction. But it is only part. The psalm waits for its completion still, and shall be filled on that day of the true marriage supper of the Lamb. III. THE ROYALTY OF THE KING. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In the great mosque of Damascus, which was a Christian church once, there may still be read, deeply cut in the stone, high above the pavement where the Mohammedans bow, these words, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom." It is true, and yet it shall be known that He is for ever and ever the Monarch of the world. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The King of kings*:—We can be at no loss to understand what King is here meant (Heb. i. 8, 9). I. HIS PERSONAL EXCELLENCES. 1. They are of a moral and mental character. We must bear in mind that this whole psalm contemplates not only a king, but a Teacher-King, a Royal Prophet. He must, consequently, be, in His own person, the perfect exemplification of the Divine wisdom that He taught. Solomon, therefore, does not represent Christ by His outward splendour, of which our Lord had none, but by His spiritual perfections. 2. They are not derived; they are His own, native, meritorious perfections, for the sake of which He is worthy to reign. Now, this cannot be said of any man. If Christ had been any other than a sinless character, it must have been seen and noticed; for He passed His life in public, He was constantly surrounded by a crowd of vigilant and malicious witnesses. The same argument might be drawn from the absolute and unquestioned authority which He always maintained over them, and which would have been weakened and destroyed if they had ever detected Him in a sin. Nor let it be imagined that all these things are said for the purpose of exhibiting our blessed Lord as a perfect model for admira-

tion morely. The application of the doctrine lies here; that, if He had not been absolutely sinless, He could neither have been an acceptable sacrifice for sin, nor have been the great High Priest of our profession. II. HIS PECULIAR OFFICIAL QUALIFICATIONS. "Grace is poured into Thy lips." 1. Think of the manner in which this great Teacher-King communicated the knowledge of Himself, and His Father's will. It is not possible for human language to express the kindness, the clearness, the tenderness that accompanied every word which proceeded from His lips. 2. Note the plenitude told of—grace is poured, not sparingly but abundantly. Now, is Christ to us altogether lovely? Did you never feel that you could part with all the world for just one beam, one spark of His infinite love; for just one drop of that heavenly joy which is the foretaste of its full fruition? I tell you plainly, I do not believe in that man's religion at all who has strong affections for all other objects, and nothing but a cold assent, an icy, philosophic calmness to lay at the feet of Jesus. I do not believe in it, because it is not the religion of the psalmist. You have just so much religion as you have love to Christ, and not an atom more! III. THE BLESSING PRONOUNCED UPON HIM. "God hath blessed Thee for ever." This could not be said of Solomon but of Christ only. And this blessing—1. Descends through Him upon all who are His. 2. It comprehends perpetual increase. True, the progress seems to us slow, but no important promises in the past have ever been fulfilled without similar delays. 3. Its chief fulfilment will be seen in the latter-day glory. Christ is King; submit to Him, so gracious and gentle in His rule. (*D. Katterns.*) *Jesus Christ compared with men:*—"Thou art fairer," etc. I. CHRIST IS SO AS THE SON OF GOD. All others have only a creature nature. He has the nature of God, and all the angels of God are bidden worship Him. Then should not we? And more than they, for He died for us, not for them. II. AS THE SON OF MAN. The children of men are born of sinful fathers; "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost." They are born with a sinful taint, but He was born without sin. III. IN WORK, SUFFERING AND TEMPTATION, which He shared with the children of men. 1. In work. He knew what it was. Some men never know their work; they spend their whole lives without finding it out, and consequently never do any work worth doing. But Christ knew His work. He made it His meat and His drink. 2. In suffering, too, Christ endured completely all that He was appointed to suffer. There was no putting away from Him that which He ought to bear; no hiding His face from that which He ought to see and confront. "The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink?" 3. In temptation. It could not defile Him as it too often defiles us. Thoughts of wrong-doing were thrown into His mind like firebrands thrown into a house, but they never even proceeded towards the production of a wrong purpose. IV. IN HIS OFFICIAL CHARACTERS of prophet, King and priest. Contrast the ordinary prophets and Christ. He was ever speaking by the Holy Spirit, ever faithful, ever possessing unlimited knowledge. And as King and priest he was perfect. V. IN FOUR THINGS IN WHICH MEN NOTABLY FAIL. 1. In the harmony and variety of His excellencies. 2. In the unbroken consistency of His actions. 3. In the perfection of His manifold works. 4. His influence was in all respects superior. We need nobody to tell us that Jesus Christ is better than man. Do you act the things you know best? Do you work out now the things with which you are most familiar? Certainly not. For example, you think of the children of men more than of Him who is "fairer than," etc. And you love them more; and prize them more. They seem to give you more pleasure. You perhaps also trust "the children of men" more than you trust Him who is "fairer than the children of men." They have often deceived you. Therefore we remind you of the truth of the text, that we may get more thought, more love, more confidence, more service, more honest speech for Him, mark, who is "fairer than the children of men." Let us take care lest any of us, after having professed to account the Lord Jesus Christ "fairer than the children of men" should be condemned for having preferred men to our Saviour. (*Samuel Martin.*) *The beauty of Christ:*—The whole psalm tells of "the spiritual marriage and unity that is betwixt Christ and His Church." I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST. "Thou art fairer than," etc. 1. It is not the beauty of His person in which the psalmist dwells with such admiration. Scripture is silent on the outward appearance of Christ. What hints there are now to show, that whatever beauty of this kind there may have been, His sorrow, poverty and hardship had greatly destroyed. 2. But it is the beauty of His character that is told of here. He was unstained by sin, glorious in holiness. To do the will of God was



His "meat"—necessary to His very existence. II. THE GRACE OF HIS COMMUNICATIONS. He dwelt among us: people wondered at His gracious words. The text may refer—I. To the gratefulness of His address. 2. To the graciousness of His words. III. THE GLORY OF HIS REWARD. "Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever" (Philip. ii. 9-11). In conclusion, What think ye of Him? What will you ask of Him? (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Fairer than the children of men*:—The writer of this psalm sees his King in the light of his own adoration, and as he gazes, his subject is transfigured before him, form and raiment change, and at last he is gazing upon a glorified Being of his own vivid imagination. Take the text, then, as a description of Jesus our Lord in His superhuman excellence, wisdom and benign position. It presents to us—I. HIS APPEARANCE. "Thou art fairer," etc. There He stands, in disposition upright, pure, magnanimous, and the very embodiment of love. The clear light is produced by combination of every possible shade of colour. It is beautiful as broken up in rose, sunflower, and rainbow, but perfect in its whiteness. Christ's soul is the pure white light resulting from the union of all possible excellencies. Every shade of worth and virtue which appears broken up and imperfect in the very best of mortals, glows in fullest splendour in His matchless character. 1. Gentleness. 2. Sympathy. 3. Self-forgetfulness. 4. Constancy. II. HIS SPEECH. "Grace is poured," etc. 1. His voice must have been wondrously sweet, rich and musical; His accents more entrancing than those tones of fable which calmed the mad passions of men, quieted the ferocity of wild beasts, and charmed the very stocks and stones to listen. 2. We know His manner of speech; as pure literature the utterances of Jesus are beyond praise, and will remain a joy for ever. Nowhere will you find anything which in arrangement of words and sentences seems so exquisitely a work of nature—like the unfolding of the flower, the flow of the river, and the song of the birds. 3. The matter of His teaching was the message and prophecy of grace. He brings God home to men's hearts. II. HIS BEATIFIC STATE. "Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever." We cannot judge of Divine blessing and curse from a superficial survey of present appearances. The thorny path which the Redeemer trod was His only way to the honour He sought. God has now placed Him in a position of supreme honour; He has gained the reverence and warm love of myriads, and is continually attracting more to Himself. Concentrate into one sublime ideal all imagination can conceive of beauty of form, comprehensiveness of mind, depth and purity of soul; imagine a perfect state where the King reigns in righteousness, midst abounding peace and plenty, and all the good that God has destined human souls to realize in Christ; and you catch a glimpse of the ideal of the text. (*Thomas Pitt.*) *Christ Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, fairer than the children of men*:—I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS. 1. In all our inquiries after the knowledge of Christ, the first thing we ought to know and consider is His person. 2. There is an ineffable glory and beauty in the person of Jesus Christ (Zech. ix. 17). 3. There are some seasons wherein our Lord Jesus is pleased to favour believers with more than ordinary clear and distinct views of His glory and beauty (John ii. 11). He ordinarily does so in the day of conversion; the pleasant month of renewed manifestations, after a long and dark night of deserts; when they are called to suffer for His sake; when deeply engaged in secret prayer, meditation, self-examination, etc. And sometimes He gives believers very clear views of His glory about the time of their departure from the present world (2 Sam. xxiii. 5); Simeon, Anna, etc. 4. A believing view of Christ in the beauty and glory of His person throws a veil over all created excellency. 5. Those to whom the Lord Jesus has been pleased to manifest His beauty in a saving manner, may go and tell Him, as the psalmist does, "Thou art fairer than the children of men." Yea, they should do it. They should tell Him in the way of holy gratitude and thankfulness for His amazing condescension in showing them His glory. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS OUR LORD JESUS IS FAIRER THAN THE CHILDREN OF MEN. 1. In the glory and dignity of His person. 2. In respect of that fulness of grace that is poured into His lips. 3. In respect of His work as the Head and Surety of the New Covenant (Isa. xii. 5; Dan. ix. 24; Heb. ii. 14; Isa. xxv. 8). 4. In respect of the revelation of God's mind and will which He has made to men (John i. 18; Ps. xl. 10; John xvii. 8). 5. In a relative capacity. There are many endearing relations in which He stands to His people; and in every one of them He infinitely excels all the children of men. Among fathers, He is the everlasting Father (Isa. ix. 6). Among husbands the most loving and affectionate; for He gave His life for His spouse (Eph. v. 2). Among brethren He is the first-born.

Among friends the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Is He a prophet? then He is the Interpreter, one among a thousand (Job. xxxiii. 23). Is He a Priest? then He is the High Priest of our profession (Heb. iii. 1). Is He a King? He is the King of kings and Lord of Lords (Num. xxiv. 7). Among shepherds He is the Chief (Heb. xiii. 20). Is He a Physician? then He is the Physician both of the soul and the body. He heals all manner of soul diseases among the people (Ps. ciii. 8). And our temporal as well as eternal life is in His hand. He gives the physician his skill, and causes the medicinal herb to spring. 6. There is an incomparable beauty and excellency in His Name. Hence says the spouse (Cant. i. 8). There is safety and protection in His Name; it is a strong tower unto which the righteous run and are safe. III. USE. 1. For information. (1) We may see and be informed why believers are so much in love with Him. They have seen the King in His beauty (Isa. xxxiii. 17); and when He is seen by the eye of faith, it is impossible not to love Him (1 Pet. ii. 7). (2) We may see they have great cause and reason to rejoice unto whom God hath revealed Christ (Luke x. 2; John xvii. 3). (3) We may see one special means of taking our hearts and affections off from the vain, transitory and fading things of a present world; and that is, to be much in the contemplation of the glory and excellency of the person of Christ; the fulness of grace that is in Him, the suitableness of His saving offices to the case of our souls, with the power and authority He has to put them in execution for the good of His Church and people. (4) Is Christ incomparably fair and excellent, and every way suited to fill the hand and heart of faith? Then we may see matter of lamentation, that, though He is set before men in the dispensation of the Gospel, in the glory of His person and riches of His grace, there are but few disposed to put honour upon Him by believing. (5) We may see that we should not content ourselves with a general consideration of the beauty and excellency of Christ; but should enter particularly into the consideration of these things in Him wherein He is fairer than the children of men.

2. For trial. Can you join with the psalmist in saying from the heart, Thou art fairer than the children of men? Is our Lord Jesus a covering of your eyes from every other Lord and lover? Do you confide in Christ, and solely rely upon His most perfect righteousness as the ground of your access to and acceptance with God? 3. For exhortation. (1) We exhort you who have been admitted to behold the matchless beauty and excellency of our glorious Immanuel, to bless and praise a God of infinite love and grace for giving you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. (2) As for you who never saw any beauty nor comeliness in Christ, why you should desire Him. Satan, the god of this world, has blinded your eyes that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ hath not yet shined unto you. (*T. Bennet.*) **Grace is poured into Thy lips.**—*Grace poured into Christ's lips.*—I. THE GRACE WHICH IS POURED INTO CHRIST'S LIPS. 1. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him as a spirit of wisdom, counsel and understanding (Isa. xi. 2, 3). Wisdom and knowledge discovered themselves in Him, to the astonishment of His greatest enemies (Mark vi. 2). 2. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him as the spirit of faith and trust in God (Matt. xxvii. 46). 3. The grace of holy gratitude and thankfulness to God, His heavenly Father, evidenced itself in Him in the highest degree of perfection (Ps. xxii. 9, 10; John xi. 41). 4. Our Lord Jesus evidenced the most cheerful and ready compliance with the will of God in every part of His work (John iv. 34; Matt. xxvi. 39). 5. The graces of humility and self-denial appear conspicuously in all the sayings and actings of Christ (Phil. ii. 7; 2 Cor. vii. 9; Matt. xi. 29; Rom. xii. 2, 3). 6. The graces of meekness and patience were most perfectly exercised by Him (Heb. xii. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 24). 7. Our Lord Jesus is full of love; love to God, and love to the souls of men was the golden weight which engaged and carried Him forward in every part of the work Jehovah gave Him to do; so we find Him entering upon the crowning piece of the work of our redemption as to purchase, in the highest exercise of love to His, and our heavenly Father (John xiv. 31). 8. He was full of zeal for God and the advancement of His declarative glory (John ii. 13-18).

II. IN WHAT CAPACITY OUR LORD JESUS HAS THIS GRACE POURED INTO HIS LIPS. 1. As the second Adam, the Surety of the New Covenant, the Head and Representative of His mystical body the Church. 2. As the Trustee of the New Covenant. 3. As the Administrator of the Covenant of grace (Acts v. 31; John xiv. 13, 14). 4. As sustaining the character of our Head and Husband, our Father, our elder Brother, our best Friend, and the Steward set over the family of God, to give every one his portion in due season. III. WHENCE IT IS THAT

THE GRACE THAT IS POURED INTO THE LIPS OF OUR GLORIOUS REDEEMER IS CONDESCENDED ON AS SUCH A LEADING PART OF HIS GLORY AND BEAUTY. 1. Grace is here considered as the glory of Christ, "because in this internal grace the reparation of the image of God doth consist." 2. This grace is the glory of Christ, "because it is that which inclines the heart of Jesus Christ unto all that goodness and kindness that He hath showed unto us." 3. Grace is the glory of Christ, "as He is, in respect of it, the great example and pattern whereunto we ought to labour after conformity." 4. Because grace being poured into His lips, and poured into His lips for our special benefit, it renders Him in every respect a fit match for us. 5. Because Jesus Christ is made an everlasting blessing to the sons of men in virtue of this grace that is poured into His lips; God having poured grace into His lips, hath set Him to be blessings for ever (Ps. xxi. 6). Men shall be blessed in Him. IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Inferences. (1) If it be so as has been said, that grace and holiness is that which renders our Lord Jesus so very fair and beautiful; then we may see how much grace should be prized by us. Grace is the ornament that adorns the soul. (2) We may see what reason we have to admire the wisdom and goodness of God, which are so richly manifested towards fallen men, in His providing such a suitable help for them. (3) We may see matter of comfort to believers amidst all their wants. (4) We may see grounds of encouragement to those who are yet destitute of grace to come to Christ for it. 2. Use of trial. Do you believe in God as your God through our Lord Jesus Christ? And do you endeavour to maintain the claim of faith to Him as your God and Father, even when clouds and darkness are round about Him? Do you study, through grace, to yield a cheerful and ready obedience to all God's commandments from love to Him and a tender regard to His authority? Are you humble and self-denied? 3. Exhortation. (1) As to you who have been admitted to behold the beauty and glory of Christ by the eye of faith, and have been made partakers of His grace. (a) We exhort you to be much taken up in the believing contemplation of the person and glory of Christ. (b) We exhort you to use and improve the grace that is in Christ. Remember that it is poured into His lips for your behoof; that you may daily come to His fulness in the exercise of faith, and receive out of it grace for grace. (c) We exhort you to be humble and thankful to God for the grace you have already received. (2) As for you who are yet strangers to Christ and so destitute of saving grace. We exhort you to believe the misery of your present condition. To believe that you stand in absolute need of Christ and the grace that is poured into His lips. To believe there is grace in Christ answering to all your wants, and that He makes you heartily welcome to come to Him, and be enriched out of His fulness for time and eternity. To consider that the day of grace will not always last with you. It is a limited day, and may be shorter than you are aware of. (*T. Bennet.*) *The worth of Jesus seen:*—Some Cornish fishermen found a belt containing diamonds. They considered it worth £20, and sold it for £20. "Ah," said the buyer, "I expect this is worth money—I think it is worth £1,000," and he sold it for I do not know how much. "Ah," said the man who bought it, "this is worth money—it is worth £3,000," and he sold it for £3,000. I believe eventually it passed into the hands of those who gave £10,000 for it. If you could only have put something at the back of the eyes of those fishermen which would have shown them the truth! That is what the Spirit of God has come for—to show us the worth of Jesus. Oh, it is such a sad thing that He should be to us so little when He wants to be so much; that we should be poor when He wants to enrich us with the treasures of His grace. (*M. G. Pearse.*)

Vers. 3-5. **Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty.**—*Christ a mighty conqueror.*—I. THE WARRIOR. The fact that He is no less than a Divine being, although for a specific purpose He assumed our nature, distinctly intimates that He should be known as the mighty God; while the power that has been given to Him as the Mediator, and the wonders He has accomplished in magnifying the law, bringing in an everlasting righteousness, spoiling principalities and powers, and destroying him that had the power of death demonstrates that, with the greatest propriety, He may be styled "the most Mighty One." "War is the garb in which He often arrays Himself when He goes forth to scourge the guilty nations of the earth." In this respect He is styled "the Captain of the Lord's host"; and described as "a man of war," and then it is emphatically added "the Lord is His name." He is Jehovah; Jehovah Zabaoth, "The Lord of Hosts," to show that the armies of earth and the hosts of heaven are under His control.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords; the King of glory; the Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle. In the contest to which He is called, He never can be mistaken, for "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him"; and it is just as impossible that He can ever be defeated, for He is "the power of God," as well as "the wisdom of God." II. HIS ENEMIES. 1. Those apostate spirits who are described as "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." Having fallen from their first estate, their minds are filled with implacable hostility to the Redeemer. 2. Those who persecute the followers of Christ. 3. Those who uphold any system of religious faith opposed to the spirit and design of Christianity. 4. All who have not yet experienced the renewing influences of the Spirit of God, and who demonstrate by their conduct that they are of the world lying in iniquity. 5. All who despise the institutions of grace. III. HIS ARMOUR. As His kingdom is spiritual in its nature, the weapons by which its interests are to be maintained are also spiritual. The sword which Messiah girds upon his thigh signifies the Holy Scriptures, elsewhere styled "the sword of the Spirit." But the sword is not the only instrument with which the Saviour goes forth against His enemies. Like an ancient warrior He bears a bow and a quiver replenished with arrows, calculated to do terrible execution against the enemy. By these "arrows," we understand the announcements of the Gospel. IV. HIS EXPEDITION AGAINST HIS ENEMIES. V. HIS VICTORY. 1. Behold the conquest of the powers of darkness upon Calvary, when, according to ancient prophecy, the Saviour bruised the head of Satan and weakened the whole energies of his kingdom (Col. ii. 14). 2. Then, again, how terribly did the Saviour act towards the Jewish nation. The cup of their iniquity at length became full, and then their capital, in which they had maltreated the Lord of Glory, was consigned to destruction; they were driven forth as homeless wanderers throughout the world. 3. Notice the victory which Christ has gained in establishing His kingdom upon earth. VI. CONCLUSION. 1. See the dignity and glory of the Captain of salvation. 2. Consider the danger of opposing Christ. 3. Contemplate the gracious character of the conquests of Christ. 4. Rejoice in the perfection and glory to which the Church shall be brought through the omnipotence and grace of Christ. (*Robert Cairns.*) *The triumph of Christ's mediatorial kingdom*.—I. CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF CHRIST TO VANQUISH THE SOULS OF MEN. 1. The first direct and decided foe over which He triumphed was the Jewish Church. That corrupt Church murdered the Son of God. But He was silent only a little more than forty-eight hours, and then rose to speak to men, and lives to speak through men, till all nations shall hear His voice, understand and believe. 2. The political power of Rome. The Jews condemned Jesus according to their law because He was a blasphemer; but as they had lost the power of capital punishment they appealed to Rome, saying, Help us to put this man to death. Pilate became a tool in their hands, and condemned the "Just One," but He triumphed over both. 3. The ungodly world. The spirit, theories, institutions, habits and pursuits of unregenerated humanity are in deadly opposition to Christ. But He will conquer, "He must reign." II. SYMPATHY WITH THE CAUSE IN WHICH HE WAS EMBARKED. What is the cause? 1. Truth; less party zeal, and more zeal for truth. 2. Righteousness; an unjust man is not a soldier of Christ. 3. Meekness; fidelity. Soldiers of the Cross, the Redeemer must triumph. III. A DEVOUT APPEAL TO HEAVEN. "Gird thy sword." 1. A living faith in the present life of Christ. "We are justified by His death, we are saved by His life." 2. A renunciation of all instruments, except those that are His. Carnal weapons have been foolishly and wickedly used in the cause of Christ—cannons, soldiers; and what an insult! what falsehood! (*Caleb Morris.*) *Messiah's victory predicted and desired*.—I. THE APPELLATION BY WHICH HE ADDRESSES CHRIST. "Most Mighty." 1. With respect to His Divine nature, Christ is the Mighty God; the Lord Jehovah, in whose arm dwells everlasting strength. Nor is it less applicable to Him considered as mediator. In this character He is Immanuel, God with us. He is mighty to conquer; for He has led captivity captive; He has conquered sin, and death, and hell—the three most formidable enemies that ever assailed the happiness of men, or the throne of God. Nor is He less mighty to save; for He has saved millions from the most awful fate, in the most desperate circumstances. He says of Himself, "I am He that speaketh in righteousness, mighty to save." 2. The import of the petition is, in brief, that He would exert His might, or the power of His grace, for the conversion and salvation of sinners. (1) That He would arm Himself with the necessary weapons. "Gird on Thy sword." Christ has

a sword of justice, to cut off incorrigible offenders; and a sword of grace, to subdue His chosen people, and make them willing in the day of His power. (2) The psalmist petitions Christ to go arrayed in His glory and majesty; that glory and majesty with which he then saw Him to be clothed. But in what do the glory and majesty of Christ consist? I answer, glory is the display or manifestation of excellency. His glory, as God, consists in a display of the infinite perfections and excellencies of His nature. His glory, as man, consists in the perfect holiness of His heart and life. His glory, as God and man united in one person, the mediator, consists in His perfect fitness to perform all those works which the office of mediator requires of Him. He possesses everything necessary to satisfy the justice and secure the honour of God. He also possesses everything necessary to excite, encourage, and justify the highest love, admiration, and confidence of sinful men; for in Him all fulness dwell, even all the fulness of the Godhead. There is in him a fulness of truth to enlighten sinners and lead them to believe in Him. He has also a fulness of grace to pardon, sanctify and save them. Now, the display or manifestation of this infinite fulness of grace and truth constitutes the glory in which the psalmist wished Christ to appear. He wished Him also to appear in His majesty. The difference between majesty and glory consists in this: glory is something which belongs either to the person or the character of a being; but majesty is more properly an attribute of office, especially of the regal office. This office Christ sustains. He is exalted to be a Prince as well as a Saviour; He is King of kings and Lord of lords; and it is principally in His character of a king that He subdues His enemies and dispenses pardon. (3) Next, the psalmist prays, that being thus armed with His powerful sword, and arrayed in His glory and majesty, Christ would ride forth through the world, conquering and to conquer. II. THE REASONS WHY THE PSALMIST WISHED THE SAVIOUR TO GO FORTH PROSPEROUSLY AND THE CAUSE IN WHICH HE WISHED HIM TO ENGAGE. Do this "because of truth, and meekness and righteousness." 1. He might, perhaps, intend the truth, meekness and righteousness of Christ Himself; for all these qualities belong to Him in the highest degrees. 2. By meekness, truth and righteousness the psalmist might mean these qualities in the abstract; and if this be His meaning, we must understand Him as specifying the cause in which he wished Immanuel to engage. III. To enforce his petition the psalmist predicts THE CERTAIN SUCCESS WHICH WOULD ATTEND MESSIAH IF HE THUS RODE FORTH TO BATTLE. "Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things;" that is, Thou shalt know experimentally what terrible things Thy power can perform. 1. The destruction with which He shall overwhelm His incorrigible enemies. 2. There are also many terrible things which attend, or rather precede, the conquest of those whom He makes willing to be His people in the day of His power. He sends His spirit to convince them of sin, of righteousness and judgment; sets His terrors in dreadful array round about them, and often brings them to the very verge of despair before they submit, and cry for mercy. That these are terrible things, indeed, to the awakened sinner, none who have suffered thus need be told; and such are the terrible things which the right hand or power of Christ performs when He rides forth to battle as the Captain of salvation. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The spiritual war*:—I. THE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. These have as their symbols the sword and arrows. 1. The sword, a heavy, massive weapon for close engagement, and inflicting terrible wounds. 2. The arrow, a light missile used to annoy the enemy at a distance. It comes whizzing through the air unseen, causes but a small wound, and is scarcely felt till its sharp point reaches the heart. 3. Now, both are emblems of one and the same thing—the Word of God. For the Word has this twofold power of wounding, sometimes as the sword, sometimes as the arrow. The first, the Word of terror, is the sword girt upon Messiah's thigh; the second, the Word of persuasion, is the arrow shot from His bow. And thus, by the joint action of these two weapons, "peoples," that is, whole kingdoms and nations in a mass, "shall fall under Thee," shall submit themselves to Christ. II. THE DEFENSIVE ARMOUR is to be noted (ver. 3), the "refulgent, dazzling armour." This tells of whatever is admirable and amiable in the external form and appearance of the Christian religion. 1. The character of Jesus Himself. 2. The light of good works shining in the lives of His disciples. 3. Whatever is decent and seemly in the government, the discipline and the rites of the Church. III. "THE WONDERS" WHICH HIS OWN RIGHT HAND WAS TO SHOW HIM are to be explained. Not "terrible things," as the Authorized Version has it, for there is no notion of terror in the Word as here used; but of things extraordinary in their kind

—grand, amazing, awful. In some of the oldest English Bibles we have here the better chosen word, "wonderful." Now, the "wonders" which Messiah's "own right hand" showed Him were the overthrow of Paganism and the Roman empire, and that by such seemingly inadequate means. It was, indeed, a wonderful thing, wrought by Christ's single arm, when his religion prevailed over the whole system of idolatry, supported as it was by the authority of sovereigns, by the learning of philosophers, and most of all, by the inveterate prejudices of the vulgar, attached to their false gods by the gratification which their very worship afforded to the sensual passions, and by the natural partiality of mankind in favour of any system, however absurd and corrupt, sanctioned by a long antiquity. It was a wonderful thing when the devil's kingdom, with much of its invisible power, lost at once the whole of its external pomp and splendour. It was a wonderful thing when the minds of all men took a sudden turn; kings became the nursing fathers of the Church, statesmen courted her alliance, philosophy embraced her faith, and even the sword was justly drawn in her defence. These were the wonderful things effected by Christ's right hand. And in the later ages there will be terrible things also achieved by Him, when Antichrist and his armies shall be overthrown. Then in verses 6 and 7 we have—IV. **THE KING SEATED ON THE THRONE OF HIS MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM**, ruling in perfect justice. The sceptre was an emblem of the perfect integrity of the monarch in the exercise of his power. Well, therefore, is it said, ver. 6, "A straight sceptre is the sceptre of Thy royalty." Earthly kings can never be perfectly just, for they are all liable to error and deception. But in the kingdom of Messiah there shall be no imperfection in His rule, and therefore He is anointed by God with the oil of gladness above all others. This declaration is, with the greatest propriety, applied to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews and made an argument of His Divinity. Thus ends this section of this psalm. (*Bishop Horsley.*) *The Captain of salvation, with His sword girt on His thigh, defending the Church from the rage of her enemies:—*

I. **WHENCE IT IS OUR LORD JESUS IS DESIGNED "MOST MIGHTY."** 1. He is so from the omnipotent power of His Divine nature, which is the principal of His mighty operations in the union of His person (Isa. ix. 6.) 2. He is mighty from the authority and power that was communicated and given unto Him by the Father, as Mediator, for the accomplishing of His whole work. Christ had strength and power as "the mighty God"; and He hath authority too, as all power is communicated to Him by God the Father (Matt xxviii. 18). And concerning the power given Him by the Father, the apostle tells us (Eph. ii. 22, 23). 3. He may justly be designed "most mighty" from what He has done, not only in giving being and existence to all things, as God equal with the Father; but also considered as Mediator. II. **IN WHAT RESPECTS THE WORD OF CHRIST MAY BE COMPARED TO A SWORD.** 1. For defence of His people. (1) Our Lord Jesus defends His subjects from their persecutors by His Word and Spirit. Whatever persecutors may be permitted to do with the bodies of any of God's saints, their souls, against which the shot of their enemies is chiefly aimed, are still in safeguard. (2) By His Word and Spirit He defends His people from the deceit and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive them. (3) Our Lord Jesus defends His people from all their inward enemies by His Word and Spirit. (4) It is by means of the Word our Lord Jesus supports, comforts and bears up His people under all the tribulations in their house of pilgrimage. 2. For the downbringing of His and their enemies (Isa. xi. 4; Rev. iii. 16). III. **SOME THINGS IMPLIED IN HIS GIRDING ON HIS SWORD.** 1. His appointing ordinances in the Church. 2. His calling, fitting and qualifying a Gospel ministry to bear His name before sinners. Faithful ministers are the gift of Christ to the Church (Eph. iv. 10, 11, 12). 3. His accompanying the dispensation of all His ordinances with the power and efficacy of His Spirit. IV. **WHY THE SWORD OF CHRIST, WHICH IS HIS WORD, IS CALLED HIS GLORY AND MAJESTY.** 1. Because of the purity and holiness that shines forth in every part of it (Ps. xix. 8, 9; Rom. vii. 12). 2. Because the scope and tendency of it is to declare His glory and majesty (John v. 39; 1 John v. 20). 3. Because He therein manifests His glory unto us. 4. Because of the glorious and majestic effects it has upon the hearts and consciences of men. V. **IMPROVEMENT.** 1. Inferences. (1) We may see and be informed when it is that our Lord Jesus has gone through with the arduous work of men's redemption and salvation to the glory of God and eternal consolation of all the spiritual Israel (Rom. ix. 5). (2) We may see what a safe and happy people they are who have fled unto Christ by faith for refuge. (3) We may see the egregious folly of all who

endeavour to stand in the way of the advancement of the kingdom and interests of Christ. (4) We may see with what reverence and attention men should both read the Word of God and hear it read and preached unto them (Heb. xii. 25). (5) We may see matter of reproof to those who do not only slight and neglect the Word of Christ, but profane and abuse it. 2. Of trial and examination. What experience have you got of the powerful effects of the Word of Christ upon your hearts? 3. Of exhortation. (1) We exhort you, who are the true subjects of the mighty Captain of our salvation, who have been subdued to the obedience of faith by the powerful efficacy of His Word and Spirit, to be faithful to Him; "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." (2) We exhort all who are yet at war with this mighty One to take a believing view of the glory of His person, the greatness of His love, the riches of His grace and suitableness of His offices to the condition of your souls; and drop the weapons of your rebellion at His feet. (T. Bennet.)

**Ver. 4. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously.**—*The Captain of salvation riding prosperously in the Gospel-chariot and bringing terrible things to pass.*—I. OPEN AND EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS DESIGNATIONS GIVEN TO THE GOSPEL IN THE TEXT. 1. It is called "the word of truth." (1) As opposed to error and false doctrine, whereby Satan endeavours to blind and ruin souls. (2) As opposed to the dispensation of grace which the Church enjoyed under the Mosaic economy (John i. 17). (3) By way of eminency in regard it is the most excellent, sweet and desirable truth (Ps. xix. 10). (4) In regard of its effects upon the hearts of those who believe it. The solid belief of the Gospel is not only accompanied with an inward change upon the understanding will and affections, but also with newness of life and conversation. 2. "The word of meekness." (1) In regard of Him whose word it is (Matt. xi. 29; Zech. ix. 9). (2) From the manner in which it was delivered to us by Christ and His apostles. (3) In respect of its design and the end which through the Divine blessing it reaches among men. 3. "The word of righteousness." (1) On account of its purity and holiness. (2) Because it contains a revelation of the righteousness of God our Saviour, which is the alone ground of a sinner's access to, and acceptance in the sight of an holy and just God; yea, the leading design of the Gospel, in subordination to the glory of its Author, is to proclaim that righteousness to sinners; to set it before them as the sure foundation of all their hope and confidence (Isa. xlv. 12, 13). (3) In respect of its effect. It is by looking into the glass of the Gospel by faith that the good work of likeness and conformity to Christ is begun in regeneration, and is carried on to perfection (2 Cor. iii. 18). II. SOME OF THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT OUR LORD JESUS BRINGS TO PASS BY MEANS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. The unhinging and removing the whole fabric of ceremonial institutions. 2. Our Lord has made terrible work upon the kingdom and interests of Satan by means of the Gospel. 3. The preaching of the Gospel by our Lord and His apostles was followed with terrible consequences to His ancient people, to whom it was first published, because of their unbelief in rejecting the compassionate counsel of God against themselves. 4. Another of the terrible things our Lord Jesus has performed by means of the Gospel is the inroads He has made upon the kingdom and power of Antichrist. 5. Our Lord Jesus performs terrible things upon the hearts and consciences of obstinate sinners by means of a dispensation of the Gospel. III. INFERENCES. 1. We may infer that the Gospel is a subject very glorious and excellent. 2. We may infer how much the Gospel ought to be esteemed by all who enjoy it in purity; and the great sin of despising and neglecting it. 3. We may see the great need all who enjoy a dispensation of the Gospel have to exercise a constant dependence upon the power and grace of Christ, in order to their profiting by it. 4. We may see from this subject that our Lord Jesus is not only succeeding in the management of the affairs of His kingdom of grace, but hastening to finish the mystery of God in the Church; He is riding in the Gospel-chariot with great celerity. 5. We may see with what holy diligence it concerns all the bearers of the Gospel, to improve their day of grace and merciful visitation. 6. We may see matter of trial and examination. Try what acquaintance you have with the designations given to the Gospel in the text, in your experience. 7. We may see matter of comfort to believers. It may comfort the heart of every child of God to consider that the Captain of salvation is making way for His second coming and the accomplishment of the promise, which will crown His felicity (John xiv. 2, 8). 8. We may see matter of reproof and terror to all the scoffers of the last times.

9. We may infer matter of exhortation. (1) We exhort all who have experienced the power of Divine grace upon their hearts, and known the joyful sound of the Gospel in truth, to bless a God of infinite love and grace for sending the Gospel to them, and that not only in word, but in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. (2) As for you, who, though you are enjoying a dispensation of the Gospel, have never yet experienced the salutary effects of it upon your hearts, we exhort you to consider the great misery of your present condition. (*T. Bennet.*) **Because of truth and meekness and righteousness.**—*The conquest of the world by meekness*:—Poetry is the language of the soul; for the soul is the seat of all deeper, purer, divinest feeling. Till the spirit is touched and stirred to her very depth and inmost self there can be no poetry. A man may be set down in the very midst of Nature's life and loveliness, amid her fields, and flowers, and streams, and mountains, and even her wildest grandeur, but if he has no communion with the soul of Nature, he can have nothing to say. He may imitate her language, but he has no real voice. Now, the poetry of the Bible is the Bible of poetry. You may find the language of feeling in other books, but this is the book of feeling. It is the utterance of the soul in its deepest moods. It lets you into the very heart of humanity. An inspired apostle has applied a certain portion of this psalm to the Redeemer of man. I. **THAT THE CONQUEST OF OUR WORLD BY CHRIST IMPLIES RATHER ITS REDEMPTION THAN ITS SUBJUGATION.** Man has been so brought under the yoke by the power of evil that his nature is comparatively enslaved. The spirit is enthralled by the flesh. The higher nature by the lower. Bondage is mistaken for freedom. The will of God is to reverse all this, to bring back man to his original condition. And to accomplish this Christ came. His life must be sacrificed to effect our deliverance, and He gave it up willingly and without reserve. Though we are taken from under the yoke of an enslaving bondage, our redemption does not place us above law, or take us from the sphere of its influence. We are under law to Him who hath redeemed us. As His freemen we owe Him our allegiance and submission. II. **THAT HE WHO IS TO EFFECT THIS CONQUEST IS REVEALED TO US AS INVESTED WITH ATTRIBUTES CORRESPONDING TO THE GRANDEUR OF HIS ENTERPRISE.** He is clothed with might, majesty and glory. Of these perfections, as they are united in the Godhead, we have many striking manifestations. See the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Or the prophet describing the calamities which God was about to inflict on the enemies of His Church and people, represents His brightness as the light, and burning coals going forth at His feet, and at whose descent the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow, while His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise! How different from all this outward and gorgeous splendour is the calm and silent majesty of the same august Being, when He is represented as saying—"Let there be light, and light was!" Or when you hear him reveal His ineffable name to Moses—"I am that I am!" So in reference to the Saviour. It is in the quiet word of His power, as when He stilled the tempest, yet more in the deep tranquillity of His own soul, that we see His glory. His might lay in His purity, His majesty in His meekness, His glory in His benevolence. There is no power equal to that of goodness, and there is nothing which goodness may not achieve. III. **THAT NOTHING COULD BE MORE SIMPLE OR APPROPRIATE THAN THE MEANS OR INSTRUMENTALITY BY WHICH THIS CONQUEST IS TO BE ACHIEVED.** Just as the purpose of the Redeemer corresponds with the benevolence and the righteousness of His character, so the means by which that purpose is to be carried into effect beautifully correspond with the calm and dignified composure of his own soul. Having, like a true hero, girt His sword upon His thigh, He is seen riding forth prosperously and in triumph. Victory waits upon His every step. And this not as the effect of force, but as the result of truth. The Conqueror of the world is the world's Great Teacher. Full of grace and truth, He came to reveal the love of God, and the way of life. He asks for no blind, unmeaning homage, and therefore He floods the mind with light. He wants no unwilling surrender, and therefore He fills the heart with love. We see, then, how it is that in the Conqueror of the world meekness is combined with truth. The dove at His baptism told what manner of reign His was to be. It was the gentleness of Christ as a teacher of truth that made Him great. It is a striking fact that Christianity makes no provision for those cases in which it fails in its professed results. Other systems reserve to themselves the freedom of changing their ground and of adapting their expedients to the ever-varying conditions of society; but the Christian system disdains any such policy. Whether it be introduced into countries where civiliza-



tion sits high-throned and regnant, or into regions where we meet with only uncultured and barbarous tribes, it is the same thing. While it possesses all the elements of universal adaptation, it knows nothing of expediency. It refuses to be thrown into any Procrustean bed, and have its dimensions determined by the caprice of men. It is through all time the same and immutable. The reason is obvious. Its failures are not due to itself but in those to whom it is addressed, or in the agency through which we seek to diffuse it. IV. THAT THE PROGRESS OF THIS CONQUEST WILL ARREST THE ATTENTION AND AWAKEN THE JOY OF THE WHOLE MORAL CREATION OF GOD. Heaven is interested in earth. But what are we doing to help forward the reign of Christ? Have we submitted ourselves to Him? Only so can we really help or share in its final joy. (R. Ferguson, LL.D.)

Ver. 5. *Thine arms are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies: whereby the people fall under Thee.*—*Enemies turned into friends*:—I. THE ARROW OF CONVICTION. It is "sharp in the heart," and is sure to kill the man. Where there is real conviction of sin the man is sure to become dead to what he was. If he were a profligate he now becomes a praying man; if a Pharisee, a self-loathing, self-despairing man; he will be humbled in the dust before God. This may explain the words, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted," as he is exalted when picked up from the dunghill of profligacy. And the Pharisee may rejoice that he is brought low. The two, meeting, may rejoice together for what God has done for them. There is a great variety of things the Lord turns into arrows. Dissatisfaction with self; the man gets into a pensive, moody state of mind, confesses himself unhappy, and begins to think the Christian the happiest man after all. The Lord may use this. Or the loss of a child may lead the mother to think about her own future state. What if it had been she who was taken. Or the loss of a friend, or husband, or wife, teaches the solemnity of death and the uncertainty of all human hopes. I have known men's own bad conduct sometimes turned into an arrow of conviction; I have known instances; two young men engaged to go out one Sunday and swear all the oaths they could think of. These oaths were turned, the awfulness of it, into an arrow of conviction to the one; he was stopped, paralyzed, and could no longer go on. Then again men may see that, though much despised and spoken against, Christians are best off after all. There is no sudden conviction here, no terror; the arrow may enter the heart almost imperceptibly, so gently, that they can hardly tell the time when they were converted. It does not matter if you are really Christ's now. Or affliction, loss of property—this oftentimes—has been used of God. And, very often, usually by the Word itself. So, then, whatever the means were, if we are but brought, if the arrow of conviction has but entered the heart, whether suddenly from the bow of God's truth, whether from your own thoughts, whether from loss of friends, or property, or affliction, or whatever may be the means, if the conviction be but there, then thou art saved, for my text says, "Whereby the people fall under Thee." This is sure to be the effect, only there must be this personal wounding more or less, this personal conviction, so as to bring you down to pray for yourself. For note—II. THE SURE EFFECT.—"The people fall under Thee." Under the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the very Son of God. (James Wells.) *The arrows of Zion's King, sharp in the hearts of His enemies, and the people falling in subjection under Him*:—I. INQUIRE WHO MAY BE SAID TO BE CHRIST'S ENEMIES. In general we may observe that He has as many enemies as there are devils in hell and irregenerate men upon earth. Should it then be inquired, What way do men evidence their enmity at Christ? We answer—1. By setting up their own wisdom and carnal reasoning in opposition to the revelation He has made of His Father's will to us in the Gospel. 2. By refusing to submit to His righteousness revealed in the Gospel (Rom. x. 3). 3. By declining His yoke, and refusing to take on His burden. 4. By neglecting and despising His ordinances. 5. By persecuting His servants and people, both by tongue and hand. 6. By unbelief. 7. By raising, propagating and defending error. 8. By apostatizing from Christ after professing subjection to Him and kindness for Him. 9. By affecting to be neither His friends nor His foes; they do not choose to oppose religion, and as little can they think to be seen taking part with it. There are many other ways whereby the natural enmity of the heart exerts itself against Christ, which we cannot insist upon; such as resting on a form of godliness without seeking acquaintance with the power of it; living in the neglect of known duty when the Lord gives them an opportunity to perform it. Taking up with the hope

of the hypocrite, and retaining a heart enmity to Christ under the cloak of pretended friendship. This is, indeed, a way of exerting the enmity of the heart against Christ, that eludes the eye of man; but He sees it, who will in a little make all the Churches know that "He searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men." II. **SPEAK OF THAT WORK OF CHRIST WHICH CONSISTS IN HIS MAKING HIS ENEMIES BECOME HIS FRIENDS BY MEANS OF THE GOSPEL.** 1. When our Lord Jesus is about to bring a person into a state of friendship with Himself, He convinces the man of the sinfulness of his condition, persuading him both of the reality of his enmity against Him, and the danger to which he is exposed on account of it. 2. Our Lord having thus convinced the sinner of his sin, He also shows him the danger to which it exposes him, letting him see that they who do the things with which He stands chargeable are worthy of death. 3. As our Lord Jesus convinces the man of his danger on account of his sin, He also causes him to see the vanity and fruitlessness of every attempt he is ready to make in order to recommend himself to the Divine favour by his own works of righteousness. 4. The Spirit of God enlightens the mind of the convinced and awakened sinner in the knowledge of Christ; He destroys the veil of ignorance wherewith the man's understanding was covered, and shines into his heart, giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it is displayed in the person of our glorious Immanuel. 5. Christ having made Himself known to the sinner, the Spirit apprehends the man for Christ, works faith in his heart, with all the other saving graces which are inseparably connected with it; and having implanted faith in the soul by means of the promise, He draws it forth into exercise so as that the soul is brought actually to embrace the Saviour and close with Him. III. **OFFER SOME THOUGHTS UPON THE EFFECT OF THAT WORK WHICH CONSISTS IN CHRIST'S MAKING HIS ENEMIES BECOME HIS FRIENDS.** 1. A real sense of the person's error and mistake in taking up the weapons of rebellion against God. 2. Falling in subjection under Christ includes in it faith's views of forgiveness, notwithstanding all the provocations the man sees himself chargeable with. 3. A sinner's falling under Christ by kindly subjecting the heart and soul to Him, has in it a holy blushing and confusion of face on account of sin the man has done. 4. This falling under Christ includes in it a cordial renouncing and giving up with every other lord and lover (Isa. xxvi. 13). 5. It includes a hearty embracing of, and closing with, Christ as our Saviour, Head and Husband. 6. It has in it a solemn giving up of the whole man unto Christ, to be saved by Him, and also to serve Him. IV. **THE APPLICATION.** 1. Of information. (1) We may see from this subject the woeful condition which all men are in by nature; they are enemies to God in their minds, and daily discovering they are so in their life and conversation (Col. i. 21). (2) We may see that men are not only enemies to God, but obstinately so; they are disposed to continue in that unhappy condition until Divine power is exerted in their behalf. (3) We may see the kindness and love of God toward sinners of mankind in devising means to have them brought back into a state of favour and friendship with Himself. (4) We may see the power and efficacy of the Word of Christ when accompanied by the Spirit. (5) We may see that there is no standing it out against the Captain of salvation; His arrows are sharp and piercing. All must either bow to Him, and yield Him the subjection of faith, or be broken by the iron rod of His irresistible power. (6) We may from this subject infer the safety and preservation of the Church and every particular believer. Zion's King is a man of war; He fights for Mount Zion and the hill thereof. He is never at a loss to strike a blow with success upon His adversaries; for strong is His hand, and high is His right hand. 2. Of examination. Have you really seen the contrariety of your nature and practice to the image, will, and holy law of God? Has the Holy Spirit convinced you of sin, because ye believed not on the only begotten Son of God? Have you really received Christ Jesus the Lord in all His offices? 3. Of exhortation. (1) We exhort such of you as are brought over to Christ, by the all-conquering power of His Spirit and grace, to bless the Lord, that ever He was pleased to make a saving revelation of His powerful arm to you, determining you to give up with the service of sin and Satan, and take on the yoke of Christ. (2) We exhort you, who have had, it may be, some experience of what is affirmed concerning the arrows of Christ in the text, but have not as yet been brought to fall under Him, in a kindly manner, taking Him as the Captain of your salvation; we intreat you to beware of stifling your convictions and quenching the motions of the Holy Spirit. (3) We exhort all who may be labouring under convictions to be on their guard against giving way to despondency or

despair, though for the present you may not see anything but blackness, darkness and tempest, attended with the trumpet sounding loudly from Mount Sinai; yet you know not how soon the day may break and the shadows flee away. (4) It may, perhaps, be the case with some that they cannot say but they have had some convictions; yet they have not had experience of so many strong and lasting convictions as they have heard and read of in the case of others, and so labour under doubts and fears whether or not they are yet brought over to Christ. If Christ be precious to you, if your souls cleave to the covenant of promise in faith and love; and if sin be the object of your real hatred, you have reason to conclude you are passed from death to life and shall never come into condemnation. (5) We exhort you who are yet in the camp of Satan, and so acting the part of enemies to Zion's King to consider the sinfulness of your conduct. You are engaged in a most unrighteous, dangerous and soul-ruining war. (*T. Bennet.*) *The Saviour's conquests in the hearts of His enemies*:—I. WHO ARE THE ENEMIES WITH WHOM THE SAVIOUR CARRIES ON A STRIFE OF MERCY in seeking to subdue them unto Himself? They are mankind at large, all men by nature. And every believer was once His enemy and the bond-servant of sin. To this point our view can never be too stedfastly or too intensely directed. For until we see the guilt, the shame, the destitution, the ingratitude, the misery, and (if God interfere not to save), the hopelessness of every natural man's rebellion against his Maker, and the suicidal hand with which, in this dreadful treason, he is striking at every interest of his own soul as the soldier of Satan, and the slave of sin, he can have no saving view of a Redeemer; he cannot know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; he cannot be filled with all the fulness of God. II. AGAINST THESE ENEMIES WHAT ARE THE WEAPONS EMPLOYED, AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS? They are the arrows of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Him. They are so called from the suddenness, the secrecy and the swiftness of their motion. And every one of the arrows of Christ, piercing and penetrating as they all are, is taken from the same exhaustless quiver, brought by the victorious Lamb from heaven, wherewith to subdue His enemies. And whereof are they made? Feather, shaft and point, they are wholly and entirely love, pure, unimaginable, undeserved, unconditional, everlasting love. These arrows probe the wound that hath been slightly healed by the deceitfulness of sin, and probe it to the quick. They force the humbled transgressor to flee from himself and take refuge in the righteousness of Christ. Oh, it is a wonderful process, and as sure as it is wonderful, whereby that arrow of the Word, when it reaches a sinner, alters the whole mass of the mind's affections, that he can no more stay himself up in the chariot of his guilty battle against God, but is carried forth that he may be "dead indeed unto sin." If I should strike a rock of marble or adamant with an arrow, and see it cleft, and gushing out with water, I must needs imagine some wonderful and secret virtue to have wrought an effect so strange. Now, our hearts are of themselves harder than the nether millstone. When, therefore, the arrows of the love of Christ strike them so mightily, yet so tenderly, and transforms the soul into His nature, who can question whence it comes and where the glory ought to be? But, while there are these arrows of love, there are also arrows of wrath in a quiver of judgment for obdurate sinners. What these are may we never know. (*J. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Effective soul archery* (Ps. xlv. 5):—There was something very fascinating about the archery of olden times. Perhaps you do not know what they could do with the bow and arrow. Why, the chief battles fought by the English Plantagenets were with the longbow. They would take the arrow of polished wood and feather it with the plume of a bird, and then it would fly from the bowstring of plaited silk. The broad fields of Agincourt and Solway Moss and Neville's Cross heard the loud thrum of the archer's bowstring. Now, we have a mightier weapon than that. It is the arrow of the Gospel; it is a sharp arrow; it is a straight arrow; it is feathered from the wing of the dove of God's Spirit; it flies from a bow made out of the wood of the Cross. As far as I can estimate or calculate, it has brought down four hundred million souls. Paul knew how to bring the notch of that arrow on to that bowstring, and its whirr was heard through the Corinthian theatres, and through the courtroom, until the knees of Felix knocked together. It was the arrow that stuck in Luther's heart when he cried out, "Oh, my sins! Oh, my sins!" If it strike a man in the head it kills his scepticism; if it strike him in the heel it will turn his step; if it strike him in the heart, he throws up his hands as did one of old when wounded in the battle, crying, "O Galilean, Thou hast conquered!" (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

**VERS. 6, 7. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.**—*The kingdom of Christ, an everlasting kingdom, and ruled with perfect justice and equity:*—I. **SHOW THAT ZION'S KING IS GOD.** 1. He is expressly called God in Scripture (Isa. ix. 6; Rom. ix. 5). 2. Such attributes are ascribed to Him in Scripture as are competent to God only. (1) Eternity (Micah v. 2). (2) Immutability (Heb. i. 10). (3) Omniscience (John xxi. 15; ii. 24, 25). (4) Omnipresence (John iii. 13). 3. Divine worship, which is due to God only, is to be performed unto Him (Heb. i. 6; Ps. ii. 12; xlv. 11; John v. 22, 23). 4. Works are done by Him which none but an infinitely powerful agent can perform (Col. i. 16; John xi. 25). II. **THE LASTING AND PERMANENT NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.** 1. General observations. (1) Our Lord Jesus has an essential kingdom, which is that absolute supreme power and authority which He exercises over all creatures in heaven, earth and hell (Ps. ciii. 19). (2) He has a kingdom and throne of grace (Eph. i. 22). (3) The kingdom of grace or the Church of Christ may be considered either as set up and administered in the world, or as set up in the hearts of men. (4) He has a throne and kingdom of glory. 2. This kingdom is to endure for ever. (1) Observe some things more generally concerning the perpetuity of the Church. The kingdom of our Lord Jesus was from everlasting in design; the King Himself is from everlasting, an eternal and mutable King; yea, He was chosen King of Zion from everlasting (Ps. lxxxix. 19). It will continue through all succeeding ages and generations. Though the kingdom of Christ, considered as to its present form of administration in the world, consisting in the preaching of the Word, the dispensation of the sacraments, will come to an end; these ordinances being no further necessary, once that the saints are perfected; yet, substantially considered, it shall be for ever and ever (Ps. lxxxix. 35, 37). (2) Show in some particulars that the Church is for ever and ever. As the King is for ever and ever, so are the subjects of His kingdom (Rom. v. 17). They are all united to Him, and death cannot dissolve that union. When they have served their generations in this world according to His will, He will make them fixed pillars in His Father's house above (Rev. iii. 12). The laws of the kingdom are for ever and ever. The treasures of the kingdom are for ever and ever. These are the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. iii. 8). The revenue of the kingdom is for ever and ever. The united praises of the saints is the revenue of the kingdom (Ps. cxlvi. 2). The charter of the kingdom is for ever and ever (Isa. liv. 10; Tit. i. 2; Rev. iv. 3). III. **SHOW THAT THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD JESUS IS RULED IN THE MOST JUST AND EQUITABLE MANNER.** 1. There is a righteous Prince upon the throne. He came to the throne in a just and righteous manner; it was by the appointment of God the Father (Ps. ii. 6). 2. The laws of the kingdom are right. 3. Our Lord Jesus effectually promotes and advances the spiritual welfare and advantage of His true subjects by all His dispensations toward the Church. 4. The sceptre of the kingdom must be right; for the King "loves righteousness, and hates iniquity with a most perfect hatred"; and elsewhere the psalmist saith, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." 5. The sceptre of Immanuel's kingdom will appear to be a right sceptre when it is considered that the King not only loves righteousness, but is perfectly in case to act according to the desire of His heart. IV. **USE**—1. Of information. (1) We may see what a weighty and important work it was to redeem the Church, gather her from among the world lying in wickedness, wrest her out of the hand of Satan, rule and defend her from all her enemies, when none but an infinite Person was equal to the undertaking. (2) We may see the dignity, safety and happiness of all the true subjects of Christ. It is their highest dignity to have Him for their King. Their life and safety lies in their union with, and relation to Him. (3) See how absurd and impious it is to oppose the kingdom and interests of Christ, and molest His true subjects. "The sceptre of His kingdom is a right sceptre," and therefore to oppose His rule and government is in the highest degree both sinful and dangerous. (4) Is the sceptre of Christ a sceptre that is right? then we may see how unbecoming His subjects it is to quarrel with, fret and repine at any of His dispensations, either toward the Church in general, or themselves in particular. (5) We may see that those who are determined by grace to give up themselves to Christ, to be saved by Him, and serve Him, are not such fools as the world takes them to be. He is managing all things in His kingdom for the advancement of His own glory, and the real good of His subjects, whether for the time they see him to be doing so or not. (6) Hence, see the need we have of faith to believe that Zion's King is doing all things well, even when His way is in the sea and His paths in the deep waters. (7) Is the sceptre of Immanuel's kingdom a right sceptre? then see

how much it concerns all the subjects of His kingdom, to endeavour to imitate their King in acting a faithful, just and righteous part in their places and stations toward Him, one another, and all with whom they have occasion to be conversant. (8) We should be constantly upon our guard against judging rashly about any part of Christ's management in His kingdom that may for the time appear unaccountable to us (Acts i. 7). 2. Of trial and examination. It concerns you, therefore, to try whether you be among the true subjects of Christ or not; and if you are really so, Zion's King has the throne of your hearts; He possesses the highest room there, and Satan is dethroned (Luke xi. 21). You are in some measure acquainted with spiritual light and liberty. 8. Of exhortation. (1) We exhort you who are the true subjects of Zion's King to be thankful to God for erecting a kingdom of grace in the world, and particularly that He has set it up in the Gentile world (Isa. xxiv. 16). (2) We exhort all who are yet enemies to Zion's King, young and old, poor and rich, to consider the sinfulness and danger of continuing in that condition. (T. Bennet.)

Ver. 7. **Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.**—*The gladness of Jesus.*—This is our exceeding joy—the gladness of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Yet it is not a matter of which we often think. The Man of Sorrows is much more familiar to us than the Saviour anointed with the oil of gladness. He was the saddest of men, but He was also the gladdest. This is not contradictory. The capacity for grief is the measure of the capacity for gladness. The depth is the height. He who never sinks never soars. The keen sensitiveness to sorrow is also and necessarily the keen sensitiveness, in every healthy soul, to joy. The perfect human nature of our Lord, having every faculty developed perfectly, had this in its completeness—the faculty of gladness. 1. In the character of Jesus Christ there was nothing that marred or lessened in any wise His gladness. We are rent and torn by a score of distractions. It is as if the strings of the soul were some of them broken, and some were all unstrung; and on the others a dozen diverse players to contend for mastery. What a strife and horrid discord is life with many. 2. Think, too, of the sources of gladness in Himself. All the beatitudes were His and His perfectly. And all the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace and all the rest, all of them the elements of a perfect gladness. 3. Then think of His gladness arising from His relationship alike to heaven and earth. "The Child grew and waxed strong in spirit; filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." And yet again, says St. Luke, "the Child increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." The perfect love of heaven and earth meet in Jesus. Count up all sources of gladness; there is none that can compare with the consciousness of God's favour. To walk hand in hand with Him is Paradise restored. (1) And He grew in favour with man. Never was any so gladdened with the love of earth as was our blessed Lord and Master. Whilst it is true that the world hated Him, and the Pharisees and Scribes took counsel against Him; yet it is also true that the inner circle of His acquaintance yielded Him a devotion such as none else ever knew. Men and women, and little children gladdened the heart of Jesus. And we can help to make Him glad. We do so when we bring to Him our gratitude, and love and trust. Think of the gladness of His youth. He was no melancholy boy of whom we read that He grew in favour with men; no mysterious dreamer whom none could understand. Never, surely, was there upon the earth a sunnier boyhood than that of the holy Child of Nazareth. Take the story of the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Take another instance—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, 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." The word means literally that He "danced for joy." It is an instance of a joy which could not either be restrained or uttered. And the source of it may well suggest the thought that it was not a single or exceptional event in His life. Then, think of the gladness of Jesus in His work—its purpose, its objects, the poor; His fitness for it, His power in it; see His miracles. See the parables of Luke xv. as showing His joy. (Mark Guy Pearse.) *The gladness of the Man of Sorrows.*—Consider—I. THAT PART OF OUR SAVIOUR'S JOY WHICH IS GIVEN HIM BY HIS FATHER. He possessed much of this anointing with the oil of gladness even while He was here on earth. He grew in favour both with God and man. Then, His was the joy of doing good. To do as He did must give joy to a benevolent mind. And of being good. And in the consideration that He was doing His Father's will. And in the glorious prospect.

And after He had "endured the cross, despising the shame." And what joy was His as the risen Mediator. That He had now accomplished a work which He had meditated upon from all eternity. Consider, too, His joy must have been commensurate with the pains which He endured, and how great they were. His joy would arise from the enemies He had overcome, from His having loved righteousness. See His life; the effect of His work. The text adds, "Thou hatest wickedness." A man's character is not complete without a perfect hatred of sin. And Christ's joy is greater than that of all others. Thus did God anoint Him. II. **THE GLADNESS AFFORDED BY THE CHURCH.** The merits, graces, their love, their praise, their prayers, their faith, are like the myrrh, etc., that when He rides in His triumphal chariot He scatters odour all around. He rejoices over the saints as the objects of His choice; and because they have cost Him so much; and they are His workmanship. Let us think how we can make Him glad. III. **LET US BE GLAD IN HIM.** God has made the King glad, and His saints make Him glad; let us be glad too. But let us mind that our gladness is of the right sort. "We will rejoice and be glad in Thee." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The oil of gladness*:—The anointing received by our Lord was the resting upon Him of the Spirit of God without measure (Isa. lxi.). Therefore by the "oil of gladness" is meant the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of joy. The whole Trinity is engaged in our salvation. The Father sends the Son, the Son comes, the Holy Spirit anoints Him. I. **THE SAVIOUR'S ANOINTING WITH GLADNESS.** We think more often of our Saviour as the "Man of Sorrows" rather than in connection with gladness. To those who only saw Him outwardly He was the Man of Sorrows, but those who knew His heart knew well that a deep joy abode there. Is there not seen to be happiness in the heart when the noblest motives are paramount and the sweetest graces bear sway? 1. Our Lord's gladness which He had in His work, Psalm xl. tells of Him as saying, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." At the well of Samaria His joy in the conversion of the woman He met there made Him quite forget all about His need of food. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"—so He tells His disciples. Once, indeed, His joy flowed over, so that others could see it, when He said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because," etc. And it is added, "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." And so, in their measure, is it with those who are His followers. They also are in like manner anointed with the oil of gladness. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought;" they work for the King with a willing heart. 2. Note, further, that our Lord had this oil of gladness from His work. He did reap in joy as well as sow in tears. The good shepherd rejoiced when he had found his sheep that was lost. The Saviour looks upon the redeemed with an unspeakable delight. And we may be partakers in this joy of being instrumentally the saviour of others; then you, also, partake of His gladness. 3. And our Lord has this gladness in this sense too—that His person and His work are the cause of ineffable gladness in others. It fills us with delight only to think of Him. "The very thought of Thee with sweetness fills my heart." What gladness He created when He was here below. And if the Lord Jesus be with us, we can give joy to others. There are some whose very presence comforts others, their words are so full of consolation and help. II. **THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWAL OF THIS ANOINTING UPON HIM.** "Thou lovest righteousness and . . . therefore God," etc. There must be perfect holiness before there can be perfect happiness. Sin is the enemy of joy. Let the sinner say what he likes, sin can no more dwell with real joy than the lion will lie down with the lamb. Now, every way Jesus loved righteousness intensely. He died that He might establish it. And those who are in fellowship with Him are anointed also. The holy oil was forbidden to be placed upon a stranger to God's holy house; and upon man's flesh it could not be poured, because man's flesh is a corrupt and polluted thing. So, then, because He is righteous Himself, and because He makes others righteous, Christ has received this anointing. III. **THE MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THIS, THIS OIL OF GLADNESS UPON US.** Now, does the Holy Spirit give us gladness? 1. Because we are anointed "kings and priests with God, and we shall reign for ever." 2. We are consecrated to the Lord. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. 3. By this oil we are qualified for our office (1 John ii. 20). 4. The Spirit of God heals our diseases. The Eastern mode of medicine was generally the application of oil, and certainly the Holy Spirit is a healer to us. What wounds and bruises have been healed with this oil. 5. Thus, also, we are supplied and softened. So was it with the body when oil was applied to it, and softness and tenderness of heart are the work of the Holy Spirit. 6. By the oil of the Holy

Spirit we are strengthened. 7. Beautified. 8. Perfumed. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Jesus Christ anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows*:—I. THE FELLOWSHIP THAT IS BETWEEN CHRIST AND ALL TRUE BELIEVERS. 1. General observations. (1) All the fellowship which any of the sons of men have with Christ is founded in union to His person and reconciliation to God through Him. (2) The fellowship that is betwixt Christ and believers does not constitute an equality between Him and them. (3) As our Lord Jesus was alone in the work of redemption, having no hand either of man or angel to help Him, as He tells us (Isa. lxiii. 8), so He has no partners in the glory resulting therefrom. II. OUR LORD'S EXALTATION, HERE CALLED HIS BEING, ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS. 1. Preliminary remarks. (1) Our Lord's humiliation made no change with respect to His person. (2) As His humiliation made no change in respect of His person, so neither has His exaltation. Wherefore, when we speak of His being exalted, He is to be considered not as God absolutely, but as God-man Mediator. It is only as sustaining this character that He could either be humbled or exalted. 2. Some particulars wherein our Lord's exaltation doth consist. (1) It consists in "a manifestation of the glory of His Deity in and through His humanity. As it had been obscured in the humanity while He was humbled, so it breaks out in the humanity when that nature is glorified, as a candle in a dark lantern doth through the transparent crystal, when the obscuring plate is drawn aside." This is the glory which He prayed for (John xvii. 5). (2) It consists in the raising of the human nature of Christ to an inconceivable height of glory; such a height of glory as the human nature united to a Divine Person is capable of, which must be by many degrees superior to what either mere men or angels are capable to enjoy. (3) View His exaltation as set over against His humiliation (Phil. ii. 8-11). In His resurrection He was exalted above the grave; in His ascension He was exalted above the earth; and in His session at the Father's right hand He was made higher than the heavens, "exalted far above all heavens" (Eph. iv. 10). (4) The exaltation of Christ consists in His being furnished in His human nature with all these gifts and endowments of the Spirit which are suitable and necessary to the glorious condition unto which He is now raised at the Father's right hand (Acts ii. 33; Eph. iv. 8). 3. Inquire why our Lord's exaltation is called His being anointed with the oil of gladness; or show whence it is that His exaltation did afford Him so much gladness. (1) His exaltation afforded Him the greatest joy and gladness, being a most infallible proof that God the Father is well pleased with what He has done. (2) Because then the eternal salvation of an innumerable company of fallen men, for whom He had an everlasting love, was effectually secured. And He was now to sit with the most consummate delight and satisfaction at the Father's right hand, and see the travel of His soul entering into the joy of their Lord from every quarter under heaven according to the promise (Isa. liii. 11). (3) Because by His exaltation He was freed from all that labour, toil and sorrow to which He had been so eminently exposed in His humbled estate. III. SHOW IN WHAT RESPECTS OUR LORD JESUS MAY BE SAID TO BE ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS, OR EXALTED ABOVE HIS FELLOWS. 1. Jesus Christ is anointed above His fellows, in regard He is deservedly exalted to all that glory which He now possesses as Mediator, and that, whether we consider His exaltation as the proper reward of His humiliation or not. 2. He is exalted above His fellows, in regard His exaltation was effected by His own power. He arose from the dead by His own power (John ii. 19). "It was not possible for Him to be holden of death." 3. He is exalted above His fellows, in regard His human nature, in virtue of its union with His Divine Person, is capable of possessing an inconceivably greater degree of glory than any of His fellows. 4. He is exalted above His fellows, in regard His exaltation effectually secures theirs. He has meritoriously procured the exaltation of all His fellows by His humiliation. And when He ascended on high, the everlasting doors were cast wide open, never to be shut again till all His fellows be brought where He is (Ps. xxiv. 7). 5. Jesus Christ is exalted above His fellows, inasmuch as He is to be the eternal object of their worship and adoration. IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Of information. (1) We may see that the work of redemption as to purchase is a finished work (Heb. iv. 10). (2) We may see that the work of redemption is highly pleasing and delightful to God. It is called "the pleasure of the Lord" (Isa. liii. 10). And He has given undoubted evidence that it is so in the glorious advancement of Christ to "His own right hand," and His appointing him "the Heir of all things." (3) We may see that the reproach and ignominy of the cross is entirely wiped away, and the human nature greatly

dignified. (4) We may see with what holy boldness and confidence we may draw near to God. (5) See what ample security all true believers have for their being exalted in due time. Christ is exalted, and they are already exalted in Him as their Head and Representative (Eph. ii. 6), and they shall be exalted with Him in their own persons; He is now "lifted up from the earth," and "will draw them" after Him. His demand shall be fully answered (John xvii. 24). (6) Is Jesus Christ exalted? Then see how vain all the attempts of hell and earth against His work and interest must prove in the issue. (7) See noble encouragement to all who hear the Gospel to come to Christ for all spiritual blessings. (8) See the dreadful sin and danger that there must be in despising Christ now that He is highly exalted. When the sin of despising Him in His humbled estate, when He appeared but as a tender plant, and a root sprung out of a dry ground, was so very great, it must still be more highly aggravated now, because the Son of Man is now glorified. 2. Of trial. (1) What experience have you of being "planted in the likeness of Christ's death"? (2) All who shall be exalted to a state of glory with Christ are first planted in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. vi. 5). (3) If you really expect, yea, if you in earnest desire to be where Christ is, you are much concerned about being "made meet" for the glory that is to be revealed. (4) Does the prospect of your being anointed with the oil of gladness in due time support and comfort your hearts under present discouragements? (5) All Christ's fellow, all true believers dearly love Him. They admire His person, and his beauty is incomparable in their esteem. They admire His love, and put the highest value on His righteousness. 3. Of exhortation. (1) As to you who are believers. We exhort you to bless God for Christ, who was "delivered for your offences," etc. Rejoice that Christ is now "anointed with the oil of gladness." His exaltation is matter of great joy to all His fellows (John xiv. 28), both on His own account, because all His sorrows are now swallowed up of joy; and on their account, because He is gone to heaven on their business, and as their Forerunner. He is gone to prepare a place for them, and to prepare them for the enjoyment of it, by His Spirit. We exhort you, while you are at home in the body, and so absent from the Lord, carefully to keep up the correspondence which He settled betwixt Him and all His fellows before He left this world, in respect of His bodily presence (John xiv. 13). Be exhorted to act faithfully for Christ in your day and generation, place and station in the world. We exhort you to look forward, and press on through all opposing difficulties "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Lift up your heads, and look out for the day of your complete redemption (Isa. xxxv. 10; John xiv. 3). (2) We exhort you, who are yet in a natural state and condition, to lay to heart the sin you stand chargeable with, the misery you are under, and the wrath to which you are exposed. (T. Bennet.)

Ver. 8. **All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.**—*Out of the ivory palaces:*—I look upon the kingly robes of Christ; and as I lift them, flashing with eternal jewels, the whole house is filled with the aroma of these garments, which "small of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." I. **WHY THE ROBES OF CHRIST ARE ODOROUS WITH MYRRH.** The first present that was ever given to Christ was a sprig of myrrh, thrown on His infantile bed in Bethlehem; and the last gift that Christ ever had was myrrh pressed into the cup of His crucifixion. The natives would take a stone and bruise the tree, and then there would exude a gum that would saturate all the ground beneath. This gum was used for purposes of merchandise. One piece of it, no longer than a chestnut, would whelm a whole room with odours. It was put in closets, in chests, in drawers, in rooms, and its perfume adhered almost interminably to anything that was anywhere near it. So, when I read that Christ's garments smell of myrrh, I immediately conclude the exquisite sweetness of Jesus. I know that to many He is only like any historical person. But to those who know Him in all His grace He is music, and light, and warmth, and thrill, and eternal fragrance. Oh that you all knew His sweetness! How soon you would turn from your revels. II. **WHY THE ROBES OF JESUS ARE ODOROUS WITH ALOES.** There is some difference of opinion about where these aloes grew, what is the colour of the flower, what is the particular appearance of the herb. Suffice it to know that aloes mean bitterness all the world over; and when Christ comes with garments bearing that particular odour, they suggest to us the bitterness of a Saviour's suffering. Were there ever such nights as Jesus lived through—



nights on the mountain, nights on the sea, nights in the desert? John leaned his head on Christ; but who did Christ lean on? Five thousand men fed by the Saviour; who fed Jesus? Oh, was it not all aloe; nothing else? And this not to win fame as a martyr, but because He wanted to pluck you and me from hell, and to raise us to heaven. Ye whose lot is bright and fair, ye who have had bright and sparkling beverages, how do you feel towards Him who for you took the bitter aloe? III. WHY THESE GARMENTS ARE ODOROUS WITH CASSIA. Cassia was regarded as having great healing and curative power. But had not our Lord Jesus this? All the leaves of this Bible are only so many prescriptions from the Divine Physician, written, not in Latin, like the prescriptions of earthly physicians, but written in plain English, so that a man, though a fool, need not err therein. Thank God that the Saviour's garments smell of cassia. Christ made every house where He stopped a dispensary. I do not believe that in the nineteen centuries that have gone by since then His heart has got hard. I feel that we can come to-night, with all our wounds of soul, and get His benediction. He comes "out of the ivory palaces." Some of the palaces of the olden time were adorned with ivory. Ahab and Solomon had their houses furnished with it. These palaces are types of heaven. What a place heaven must be. Not so many castles on either side of the Rhine as are ivory palaces on either side of the river of God. We need to be washed, we need to be rehabilitated before we go into the ivory palaces. Eternal God, let the surges of Thy pardoning mercy roll over us! (T. De Witt Talmage.) *The garments of Christ, our New Testament High Priest, sending forth a sweet savour from His ivory palaces:*—I. MENTION SOME THINGS IMPLIED. 1. That it is most pleasant and delightful exercise and employment for the people of God to contemplate the glory and excellency of Christ; the glory of His person, and the unsearchable riches of grace, and gracious influences of the Spirit which are treasured up in Him. 2. That the more closely and particularly that we consider Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the more will we find in Him to draw out our affections to Him, and heighten our esteem and commendations of Him, and of everything belonging to Him, even as to His garments. 3. That as believers have spiritual senses, whereby they savour the things that be of God, so it is their privilege at some seasons to be admitted to such special nearness to Christ as that they can smell His garments. 4. That faith sees not only a fulness in Christ that is inexhaustible, but also a pleasant variety of spiritual blessings every way suited to the various wants and necessities of the soul. 5. That Christ is not only suited to the case of believers, but also to their very wish and desire. He perfectly fills the hand and heart of faith, and no other object can do it (Ps. lxxiii. 25). II. GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GARMENTS OF OUR EXALTED HIGH PRIEST, WHICH ARE HERE COMMENDED FOR THEIR SAVOURY SMELL. 1. The embroidered coat of the high priest (Ex. xxviii. 39) seems evidently to have signified the righteousness of Christ, consisting in the holiness of His human nature, the perfect conformity of His life to the law-precept, and His satisfactory sufferings and death. 2. We may consider the girdle of the High Priest as shadowing forth the truth and faithfulness of Christ; concerning Him it is said (Isa. xi. 5). It might also denote His strength (Prov. xxxi. 17), and His readiness for service (1 Kings xviii. 46). 3. The sacred bells, which hung upon the hem of the high priest's robe, were a lively representation of Christ's voice in the Gospel, and of His intercession at the Father's right hand. 4. The high priest's bearing the names of the children of Israel in the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, represented our great Gospel High Priest supporting His Church and people, bearing them and all their burdens, as it were, upon His shoulders (Isa. ix. 6). 5. There was much of the Gospel represented by the breastplate of the high priest and the things belonging thereto. The precious stones, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, did signify all the saints; the whole "Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven"; and these stones being set in the breastplate, intimates that our New Testament High Priest has all the spiritual Israel near His heart; they rest on the bosom of His warmest love and affection, being set as "a seal upon His heart, and as a seal upon His arm," as the Spouse speaks (Cant. viii. 6). And whereas the breastplate was fastened to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, it was to intimate that the love and power of Christ are inseparably engaged in the business of our salvation; they go hand in hand therein. The use of the Urim and Thummim was for consultation in dark and difficult cases (Num. xxvii. 21; 1 Kings xxiii. 9). They were evidently intended as a shadow of that fulness of Divine light and perfection that dwells in Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the Messenger of the Covenant, and the unerring Interpreter of its secrets. 6. The high priest had a fair mitre for his head made of fine linen (Exod. xxviii. 39). This mitre, or crown, points us to the princely dignity and kingly power of our Lord (Zech. vi. 13). 7. The high priest had a golden plate above the mitre with this inscription upon it, "Holiness to the Lord," or, "the holiness of the Lord." Hence the Lord saith to Moses (Exod. xxviii. 36). When we consult the two following verses, we see this piece of priestly attire directing us to behold the absolute perfection and spotless holiness of our Gospel High Priest, and His bearing away the iniquity of our holy things, and procuring our access to, and acceptance with God, notwithstanding our daily failings and shortcomings. 8. Our Lord Jesus is set forth in Scripture as clothed in a suitableness to the various branches of the work He is employed in, whether of mercy to His people, or of judgment towards His enemies. Accordingly, being about to reform His Church, comfort His people, and chastise His enemies (Isa. lix. 17). He is said to have "put on righteousness as a breastplate," etc. He appeared to the prophet Isaiah "red in His apparel" (Isa. lxiii. 2). And to John in the vision he had of Him, spreading death and destruction among the enemies of His Church and people (Rev. xix. 15), He appeared in a vesture dipt in blood as being expressive of the nature of the work He was engaged in.

III. OUR NOW EXALTED SAVIOUR IS INCOMPARABLY SWEET AND SAVOURY TO ALL SPIRITUAL DISCERNERS. 1. He is sweet and savoury to God the Father; He is His "well beloved Son," His "elect, in whom His soul delighteth" (Isa. xlii. 1). 2. He is savoury to all true believers (1 Pet. ii. 7). There is an unspeakable sweetness to them in all His saving offices, and in all His names, characters and relations. IV. USE. 1. Of information. (1) Hence, see that our Lord Jesus Christ is a lovely object, in Himself considered, however few should be taken up with His person and righteousness and the saving blessings of His purchase. (2) Hence see, that believers are men of another taste and smell than the rest of the world. The natural man sees no beauty and excellency in Christ why he should desire Him (Isa. liii. 2). But the believer has the spiritual faculty, whereby he savours the things that be of God. (3) We may see whence it is that the garments of believers are said to smell as Lebanon (Cant. iv. 11). The reason is, they have been brought to smell Christ's garments, and the smell of them has gone about their hearts. They are savingly united to His person, and the precious anointing oil that was poured upon His head has been made to drop upon them. (4) Is Christ so sweet and savoury? Is there everything in Him to attract and draw sinners to believe in Him, love and esteem Him above all other persons and things? then we may see matter of lamentation that so few are disposed to adopt the language of the text. 2. Of trial and examination. (1) Have you experienced the truth contained in the text? If so, you have been endowed with the spiritual smell. (2) Have you seen our glorious High Priest in His person, righteousness, offices and fulness, as suited, not only to your case, but also to your wish and desire? If so, sin has a bad savour in your nostrils. 3. Of exhortation. (1) We exhort you who have been brought by grace to adopt the language of the text, to bless the Lord that He has been graciously pleased to give you the spiritual faculty to discern and take up the sweetness and excellency of Christ. Be concerned to have your spiritual senses more and more exercised to savour the things of Christ; and to this end meditate much upon the glory of His person and His amazing love to you, which had no cause without Himself; His savoury life, which was never stained with the smallest blot; the sacrifice He offered to God in your stead for a sweet-smelling savour; and His prevalent intercession within the veil for you. Do not fail, as you have occasion, to commend Christ and His savoury garments to all about you, both with your mouth, and in your walk and conversation; tell them, as Providence gives you an opportunity, that your Beloved is more than another beloved. (2) As for you who are yet strangers to Christ, and to whom all that soul-satisfying, heart-cheering and beautifying sweetness that is in Him is but a hearsay, and will continue to be so until the Spirit be poured out upon you from on high: we exhort you to believe the misery, sinfulness and danger of your present condition, and to betake yourselves by faith to our exalted High Priest, who sits at God's right hand. Come and see Him as set forth in the word of grace and promise as God's prepared goodness for the poor, and for you among the rest (1 Tim. i. 15). One glance at Him by the eye of faith will remove all the prejudices you have of Him, constrain you to love Him, and lay you under the pleasant necessity of adopting the language of the text. (T. Bennet.)

**Ver. 9. Kings' daughters were among Thy honourable women. Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.**—*The consummation of Messiah's glory and the Church's happiness*.—I. THE GENERAL PROPRIETY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IMAGE OF A MARRIAGE AS IT IS HERE EMPLOYED. Familiar emblems are needful for the better understanding of the Gospel by the mass of the people. Now, the relation between Christ and His Church, it is evident, must be of a nature not to be adequately typified by anything in the material world; and nothing could be found in human life which might so aptly represent it as the relation of husband and wife in the holy state of wedlock; and in this the analogy is so perfect that the notion of the ancient Jews has received the express sanction of St. Paul, that the relation of the Saviour and the Church was typified in the union of our first parents, and in the particular manner of Eve's formation out of the substance of Adam. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS MARRIAGE. The magnificence of the court of the king as it appeared on the wedding-day, the splendour of the royal robes, the profusion of rich perfumes, are dwelt on. Of these last such quantities were used that the whole person was not merely sprinkled, but "ran down" with them to the very skirts of the garment. The psalmist describes the fragrance of Messiah's garments to be such as if the robes had been made of the very substance of aromatic woods. "Thy garments are all myrrh, aloes and cassia." No palace adorned with ivory—a favourite ornament of palaces—could furnish such fragrance, no, nor even the incense that was burnt upon the golden altar as a grateful odour to the Lord. Now, all these perfumed garments were typical; first, of the graces and virtues of the Redeemer Himself in His human character; secondly, of whatever is refreshing, encouraging, consoling, and cheering in the external ministration of the word; and, thirdly, of the internal comforts of the Holy Spirit. We proceed to other particulars in the magnificent appearance of His court on the wedding-day, figurative of the glory of the Church in its final condition of purity and peace, and of the rank and order of particular churches. "Kings' daughters are among Thy honourable women." But the primary meaning of the word rendered "honourable" is "bright, sparkling," and the imagery of the original would be better preserved if rendered thus, "Kings' daughters are among the bright beauties of Thy court." The beauty certainly is mystic—the beauty of evangelical sanctity and innocence. But who are these kings' daughters? They are the kingdoms and peoples, perhaps the various national churches, fostered for many ages by the piety of Christian princes, and now brought to the perfection of beauty by their being cleansed from all wrong—they may well be called "kings' daughters," of whom kings and queens are called in prophetic language the fathers and mothers. Then, the consort, "the queen," who is she? Some expositors have imagined that the consort is an emblem of the Church catholic in her totality; the kings' daughters, typical of the several particular churches of which that one universal is composed. But the queen consort here is unquestionably the Hebrew Church; the Church of the natural Israel, reunited, by her conversion, to her husband, and advanced to the high prerogative of the mother Church of Christendom; and the kings' daughters are the churches which had been gathered out of the Gentiles in the interval between the expulsion of his wife and the taking of her home again, that is, between the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans and their restoration. The restoration of the Hebrew Church to the rights of a wife, to the situation of the queen consort in Messiah's kingdom upon earth, is the constant strain of prophecy. The prophet, I said, describes the Gentile converts as becoming, upon the reunion, children of the pardoned wife. And so St. Paul (Rom. xi.). The standard gold upon the queen's robe denotes the treasures of which the Church is the depository—the Word and Sacraments, and the dispensation of grace and forgiveness by their due administration. Then follows—III. THE COUNSEL TO THE BRIDE (Vers 10, 11). If a princess from a distant land, taken in marriage by a great king, were admonished to forget her own people and her father's house, the purport of the advice would easily be understood to be, that she should divest herself of all attachment to the customs of her native country, and to the style of her father's court, and learn to speak the language and assume the dress, the manners and the taste of her husband's people. The "father's house," and "own people," which the psalmist advises the queen consort to forget, is the ancient Jewish religion in its external form, the ceremonies of the temple service, the sacrifices and the typical purgations of the Levitical priesthood. Not that she is to forget God's gracious promises to Abraham, nor the covenant with her forefathers, nor any of the wonderful things God did for them. But only, so as to desire no more, the ancient

Levitical rites and worship. They have served their purpose, and are now to be laid aside. Christ, her husband, is her paramount authority now, and is entitled to her unreserved obedience. There is given—IV. **THE DESCRIPTION OF THE QUEEN** (ver. 13). "The king's daughter." Who is this? Not some new personage, the Christian Church in general composed of both Jews and Gentiles, as Luther thought, but, as Bishop Hume observes, "that the connection between Christ and His spouse unites in itself every relation and every affection." She is, therefore, daughter, wife and sister all in one. The same seems to have been the notion of a learned Dominican of the seventeenth century, who remarks that the Empress Julia, in the legends of some ancient coins, is called the daughter of Augustus, whose wife she was. But, with much general reverence for the opinions of these learned commentators, I am persuaded that the stops have been misplaced in the Hebrew manuscripts by the Jewish critics upon the last revision of the text—that translators have been misled by their false division of the text, and expositors misled by translators. The stops being rightly placed, the Hebrew words give this sense: "She is all glorious"—she, the consort of whom we have been speaking, is glorious in every respect—"Daughter of a king!" That is, she is a princess born; she is glorious, therefore, for her high birth. She is, indeed, of high and heavenly extraction! Accordingly, in the Apocalypse, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is "the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God." The psalmist adds: "She is conducted in procession to the king"—in all the pomp of a public procession. This may point to some remarkable assistance which the Jews will receive from the Christian Gentiles in their re-settlement in the Holy Land (Isa. xviii. at end, and Zeph. iii. 10). And then follow the prediction as to the Church's children and the distinguished character they shall hold, and he closes with setting forth the design and predicting the effect of this Divine song. (*Bishop Horsley.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.**—*The Bridegroom's call to the bride*:—Christ and His Church are the subject of this noble psalm. I. **THE CALL TO HIGHER HOLINESS**, to higher attainments in faith, love and purity. And the figure employed suggests what is needed—the entire renunciation of the world which lieth in the wicked one, as in marriage the bride is well content to leave her old home, and all its intimacies, for the higher love that awaits her. See the call of Abraham, and what is written of the tribe of Levi. "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him," etc.; and our Lord's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is," etc. II. **THE ENFORCEMENT OF THIS EXHORTATION**. "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." That beauty is a spiritual one—the beauty of holiness, the spiritual loveliness of a soul on which the King has begun to stamp the impress of His own beauty. Many will mournfully say that no such beauty is theirs. But remember that word of the Lord, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus." "I have surely heard;" it means that it is as sweetest music in my ears. The lowly self-estimate, the deep humility of heart which such sorrow reveals is part of the very beauty which made the Lord answer to the bride who had just said, "Look not upon me, for I am black," "Behold, thou art all fair, my love; there is not a spot in thee." For the mantle of Christ's perfect righteousness is cast over every believer, and in that they are "all fair." III. **THE FURTHER ENFORCEMENT AND EXHORTATION**. "For He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." We are never to forget His Divine dignity and the unutterable disparity of rank between the parties in this marriage. "Thy Maker is thy husband." Our love, therefore, must be worship, adoration. (*C. J. Brown, D.D.*) *The portrait of the Bride*:—The transference of the historical features of this wedding-song to a spiritual purpose is not so easy or satisfactory as in the case of the Bride's consort. There is a thicker rind of prose fact to cut through, and certain of the features cannot be applied without undue violence. But in its main broad outlines this portraiture of the Bride tells of the Church of Christ as did that of the King tell of Christ Himself. I. **THE ALL-SURRENDERING LOVE THAT MUST MARK THE BRIDE**. In all real wedded life, as those who have tasted it know, there comes, by sweet necessity, the subordination, in the presence of a purer and more absorbing affection, of all lower, howsoever sweet, loves that once filled the whole heart. The same thing is true in regard to the union of the soul with Christ. The description of the Bride's abandonment of former duties and ties may be transferred, without the change of a word, to our relations to

Him. If love to Him has really come into our hearts, it will master all our yearnings and tendencies and affections, and we shall feel that we cannot but yield up everything besides by reason of the sovereign power of this new affection. It will deal with the old loves just as the new buds upon the beech-trees in the spring deal with the old leaves that still hang withered on some of the branches—push them from their hold. Love will sweep the heart clean of its antagonists. Christ demands complete surrender. Ah! I fear me that it is no uncharitable judgment to say that the bulk of so-called Christians are playing at being Christians, and have never penetrated into the depths either of the sweet all-sufficiency of the love that they say they possess, or the constraining necessity which is in it for the surrender of all besides.

**II. THE KING'S LOVE AND THE BRIDE'S REVERENCE** (ver. 11). Here are two thoughts that go, as I take it, very deep into the realities of the Christian life. The first is that, in simple literal fact, Jesus Christ is affected, in His relation to us, by the completeness of our dependence upon Him, and surrender of all else for Him. We do not believe that half vividly enough. Again, in the measure in which we live out our Christianity, in whole-hearted and thorough surrender, in that measure shall we be conscious of His nearness and feel His love. There are many Christian people that have only got religion enough to make them uncomfortable. They must not do this because it is forbidden; they ought to do that because it is commanded. They would much rather do the forbidden thing, and they have no wish to do the commanded thing. And so they live in twilight. And they cannot understand the blessed experience of the man who really walks in the light of Christ's face, and they miss the blessing that is waiting for them because they have not really given up themselves.

**III. THE REFLECTED HONOUR AND INFLUENCE OF THE BRIDE.** The Bride, thus beloved by the King, thus standing by His side, those around recognize her dignity and honour, and draw near to secure her intercession. Translate that out of the emblem into plain words, and it comes to this—if Christian people, and communities of such, are to have influence in the world, they must be thoroughgoing Christians.

**IV. THE FAIR ADORNMENT OF THE BRIDE.** "The King's daughter is all glorious within." The Book of the Revelation dresses her in the fine linen clean and white, which symbolizes the lustrous radiance and snowy purity of righteousness. The psalm describes her dress as partly consisting in garments gleaming with gold, which suggests splendour and glory, and partly in robes of careful and many-coloured embroidery, which suggests the patience with which the slow needle has been worked through the stuff, and the variegated and manifold graces and beauties with which she is adorned.

**V. THE HOMECOMING OF THE BRIDE.** (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The Bride*:—We have here the marriage of a great King, of Him who is "King of kings." Christ and the Church are the parties concerned.

**I. THE PARTY ADDRESSED.** Who is it? "Hearken, O daughter." Who is the "daughter"? The "daughter" here, without doubt, is the Church. Who else is there that can be the "daughter" of God? And how exceedingly beautiful and appropriate is the appellation bestowed upon her! She is the "daughter." And why so? Because she is the wife of the Son. It is precisely as it is recognized in our own case. The wife of the son becomes the daughter of the father of the son, and still more remarkably, she becomes the daughter-in-law. That is literally the position occupied by the Church and the light in which she is regarded by the very law of God. Hence, "hearken, O daughter." This is more than "adoption," for there, there may be no kind of connection, but here it is of the closest kind. And there follows from it the transference to the bride of the glory, riches and happiness of the husband, while all the obligations, debts, delinquencies and deficiencies belonging to the wife are taken by him. You have no enemies that are not his; he no friends that are not yours. What a wonderful union it is.

**II. THE CHARGE TO THE BRIDE.** "Hearken and consider," etc. Now, the charge to "forget thine own people," etc., may seem difficult. But there must be unreserved and undivided affection. There must be nothing allowed in the feelings and affections as comparable to Him. We must be ready to put all on one side for Christ. There must be no compromise. He gave up all for us.

**III. THE PROMISE.** "So shall the King," etc. The beauty is that of holiness. Let it be ours. (J. Capel Molyneux, B.A.) *The espousal of souls to Christ*:—

**I. AN EXHORTATION.** "Hearken, O daughter," etc. This day, if your covenant is not to be an empty mocking, your heart must be opened to hear the declaration of His love, in redeeming your soul from destruction, and offering to espouse you to Himself.

**II. AN INSTRUCTION.** "Forget

also," etc. III. A PROMISE. "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." The believer is not called to forsake the objects of his natural corrupt taste, without a much higher and more precious object being set forth for his acceptance, even the love of the King. He delights in the first efforts after righteousness, as in the green figs and tender grapes, which, though of no value in themselves, yet promise well. By all comparisons, by every means which can strengthen faith, Christ gives pledge to the soul forgetting her own people and her father's house, that His love will not be withheld, but that He will greatly desire her beauty. Thy beauty shall be perfect through His comeliness put upon thee. IV. A COMMAND. "He is thy Lord," etc. However great or perfect the beauty of the spouse may be, or however high the privileges or honours the king may vouchsafe to her, yet let her remember that all is of Christ, and through Christ, and to Christ; and let her keep her own place of subordination to Him. Let the soul making covenant with Christ beware of spiritual pride, of thinking that she has attained safety from sin, or that she is now so regenerated that she cannot fall. Be not high-minded, but fear. (*G. Innes.*) *Christ the best husband; or, an earnest invitation to young women to come and see Christ*:—I. How CHRIST DOTH ESPOUSE HIMSELF UNTO THE CHILDREN, BUT MORE ESPECIALLY UNTO THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN. The marriage knot is tied here, in which are included four things. 1. A mutual choice. Christ, when He first comes to you, finds you full of sin and pollution; and He maketh choice of you, not because of your holiness, nor of your beauty; you are drawn to make choice of this Lord Jesus Christ, because He first chose you. 2. A mutual affection accompanies the choice. The more acquaintance you have of this Lord Jesus, the more pleased you are with your choice, and the more your affections are drawn towards Him. And where can you place your affections better than upon that Jesus, who shed His blood for your sakes? 3. There is likewise mutual union; and here doth the marriage lie chiefly in this union. 4. There is a mutual obligation between Christ and His spouse. II. CHRIST DOTH INVITE ALL OF YOU TO BE HIS SPOUSE. He regardeth not the rich more than the poor. He chose a mean virgin, espoused to a carpenter, to be His mother; and He chooseth and calleth all such to be His spouse. III. THOSE WHO WOULD BE ESPOUSED UNTO CHRIST MUST HEARKEN, CONSIDER, AND INCLINE TO HIS INVITATION, AND FORGET EVEN THEIR FATHER'S HOUSE. You are not here to cast off all affections unto natural relations; but you must forget all relations, so as to be ready to forego all their favour, when it standeth in competition with that of the Lord Jesus Christ; and do not let your carnal friends and relations hinder you from closing with, and espousing, the Lord Jesus. (*G. Whitefield, M.A.*) *The privileges and duties of Christ's spouse*. These words are the Father's advice to the newly espoused Bride, how she may please her husband, His Son. 1. Consider the appellation given to the soul espoused to Christ—"Daughter." Here is the name which believers receive. The person that naturally was a child of the devil, on the espousal with the Son of God, becomes a child of God. Though He brings home a spouse out of an ill house, and has nothing with her, yet His Father welcomes her into His family, and gives her no worse word than daughter. 2. The advice. She must be very obsequious to her husband, and in all things to follow Him as His own shadow. Search the meaning of the words. "hearken and consider." This is what a dutiful wife owes to her husband. Her husband's will must be hers. Her ear to him and her eye upon him. She must renounce all others for her husband. The more she minds them the less pleasing will she be. Consider—I. THE DUTY OF THE ESPOUSED TO CHRIST, carefully to hear His will, and observe His motions, so as they may suit themselves to His pleasures in all things. This I take to be the meaning of this first clause. For explaining this doctrine, I shall show what is imported in it. It imports—1. That Christ's spouse is not left to walk at random. She is to notice every step of her carriage. 2. That those that are espoused to Christ must renounce their own will, and not seek to please themselves. "If any man," saith Jesus, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up," etc. 3. That our great aim in all things must be to please our Lord and husband, this is the law of marriage. 4. That we must trample upon our own inclinations when contrary to His, as Abraham did when offering up Isaac. 5. That when Christ's will and our own go together, our main end must be to please Him. 6. We must not think to please Him with our own desires: only with what He commands. 7. That we must ever be with eye and ear attent that we may know and do His will (Ps. cxxiii. 2). II. WHAT IT IS TO HEAR HIS WILL. He speaks through His works by our own consciences; by

His Word, and by His Spirit. And all these we must hear and obey, and that without disputing. III. HOW WE ARE TO EYE AND OBSERVE HIM SO AS TO PLEASE HIM. As our Lord and master; as our teacher; as our guide and leader; as our last and chief end; as our witness in all things; as our judge; as our husband. We should also diligently observe His countenance towards us; and His dispensations and way of dealing with us. IV. REASONS OF THIS DOCTRINE. Because of all that He is to us. Because of His love to us which so demands it. He died for us. The angels obey Him, shall not we? His pleasure is that which is best for us. His bidding is ever for our good. There are three things I would have you to believe. 1. That you are not fit to be your own choosers. The event has proved it often, in that people getting their own will has been their ruin (Ps. lxxviii. 29), and the best of the saints, getting the reins in their own hand, have set all on fire. 2. All our wilfulness proceeds on a mistake. We think sinful liberty best for us, ease, plenty, and the like. God knows it is otherwise, and therefore He will have us hear Him for our good. 3. Consider your experience. Have you not seen many times how God has done you good against your wills, good which you would never have got had He given you your will. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Christ's spouse*:—The second advice given to the spouse is this, "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house" (Gen. ii. 24). It is equivalent to that, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation" (Ephes. iv. 22; 1 Pet. i. 14). Now, in these words, "Forget also," etc., there is—1. The natural relations of Christ's spouse pointed at in contradistinction to those of her husband. She wants not relations, indeed, but they are such as she can have no credit nor good from them, but will be the worse of them, and therefore her husband has taken her out from among them, and would have her to forget them. She has some that are her natural country people, her own people. Who are these but the world that lieth in wickedness; and before she was espoused to Christ, she was one of their own, but He hath chosen her out of the world. Every country hath its own fashions, and in former times she followed the fashions of the country as well as the rest. She has also a father's house in that country. Who is her father naturally but the devil? (John viii. 44), and though she has left the house, yet he keeps house there still with his children and servants (Luke xv. 15). 2. There is the duty of Christ's spouse with respect to these. She must forget both of them. And here there is something supposed, that is, that Christ's spouse is apt to have a hankering after her own people and father's house, even after she has left them, as Laban alleged that Jacob sore longed after his father's house. There may be eager looks back again, while the soul minds them, and that with too much affection, not sufficiently weaned from them. There is something also expressed that Christ's spouse ought to forget them. Not absolutely, for she not only may, but ought to mind them for her own humiliation and thankfulness. But in respect of affection, her heart must be weaned from them, she must not desire to return to them; and in respect of practice, she must no more conform herself to them. But the hearts of Christians are often found much unweaned from their father's house. As it is with a childish, new-married woman, they have a foolish hankering after the house from which they came. I. IN WHAT THIS UNWEARIEDNESS APPEARS. 1. In the cooling of our zeal against our father's house. 2. In kindly reflections on its entertainments and pleasures. Israel lusting after the flesh-pots of Egypt. 3. In uneasiness under the restraints of our husband's house. 4. In hankering after the Egypt we have left. Remember Lot's wife. 5. In kindly entertaining any sent from thence (2 Sam. xii. 4). 6. In serving our husband after the fashion of our father's house; like a new-married woman, who, though she has changed the house, yet she keeps the fashions of that from which she came. So, though the man will not neglect prayer, hearing, and other duties, yet he is so far unweaned, that he performs these often only as they do who are still in his father's house. "When thou prayest," says He, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." He will have his own work done after the fashion of His own house. 7. In our stealing visits to our father's house, and secret tampering with former lusts. Stealing it must be, for our Lord and Husband will never give His consent to the meeting again (Ezek. vi. 9). But alas! how often is Christ's spouse missed out of her husband's house. 8. Many that have been espoused to Christ before the world, but not from the heart, quite forsake their husband, and go back, for altogether, to their father's house by their apostasy. Like the Levite's wife—for wife she was, though in a secondary degree (Judges xix.). II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS? There are some who have been joined to Christ only by the hand, but

never by the heart. But even those who are joined to Him by both may yet be chargeable with being unweaned from their father's house, as the others certainly are. For—1. The consent of many to Christ is an involuntary consent (Ps. lxxviii. 34, 86, 87). The stone thrown up in the air will fall again when the force ceaseth. 2. The heart has not been freely loosed from some one sin or another. They "go not very far away" from Egypt (Mark x. 20, 21). 3. Sin has never been made bitter enough to them. The soul that never tasted the bitterness of sin will break over purposes, vows and resolutions, to get to it again. 4. Because by reason of their not living by faith on Christ, they find not that soul satisfaction in Him which they expected. No wonder she longs to be back at her father's house who is disappointed of comfort in her husband's. 5. Because there is a principle of corruption in the best, which still inclines the wrong way. We are unstable souls. A good frame is hard to get, and easily lost. It is like letters written in the sand, that a blast of wind doth obliterate. Hence the soul often turns aside very quickly, and on very slender occasions, as Peter at the voice of a maid, and that even soon after some remarkable manifestations from the Lord. Lastly, because those of our father's house are ever seeking to seduce us, and make us as they are. How humble should all this make us, and how careful not to look back and hanker after our old sins. Think how such desires grieve the Spirit of Christ; how they will move your communion with Christ; how unfixed and unstable in religion they will make you; how they dishonour Christ; how they are the fountain of apostasy. They that are often looking away will break away at length. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's spouse*:—The bride is to forget her own people and her father's house, i. e. the wicked world, "the children of disobedience among whom we," etc. When the soul comes to Christ, it must say, as Ruth to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people," etc. I. THE FORGETTING OF HER PEOPLE BY THE BRIDE. 1. In what respects. We must forsake their company; we must not conform ourselves to them; we must forget them in affection. 2. Why we must do this. Because they are not going our way. In coming to Christ we give up with them. He says to us, If you take me, let them go their way. And the world's friendship is enmity with God (James iv. 8); and at last there will be a total separation (Matt. xx. v). Grace begins it here. Evil company, too, is an affecting plague. "Evil communications corrupt," etc. Remember, if you do not separate from them, you will share with them. II. THE FORGETTING OF THE FATHER'S HOUSE. This father is our father, the devil. 1. You must part with the master of the house, Satan, and renounce your relation to the house. Though you have no express compact with him, you have need to do this. 2. And you must quit the work of the house. We must cast off the work of darkness. They weary themselves to commit iniquity. This is work, hard, toilsome, dark, soul-ruining work. Now, you must quit the work of the house, of whatever sort it be. You must not be like those that will give over their master, engage with another, and yet come back and fall to their work again. 3. You must part with the provision and entertainments of the house. People use to get their meat where they work, and Satan's slaves get their meat also in their father's house. 4. And you must quit the fashions of the house. Every house hath its own fashions, and so has your father's; but you must not keep them up. In civil things the fashion is to mind the world first, and even to give conscience a stretch, if a person can gain any profit or ease by it. If you quit not these fashions, you will never see the house of heaven (Luke x. 41, 42; 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9; 1 Thess. iv. 6). If ever men get more religion, they will get more moral honesty. 5. You must quit the garb of the house. Under the Old Testament, when people were to make any solemn appearance before God, they were called to change their garments (Gen. xxxiv. 2). You must part with the inner garment of the house, "that is the old man with his deeds" (Ephes. iv. 22; Col. iii. 9). The old man is the corrupt evil nature. You must also part with the upper garment of the house, that is, the filthy rags of our own righteousness (Isa. lxiv. 6; Zech. iii. 4). And lastly, you must quit the interest of the house. People are readily concerned for the interest of their own house, and none more than the members of your father's house. Now, if you mind for heaven you must quit this interest and pursue that of heaven, which is directly opposite (Gen. iii. 15). III. WHY MUST CHRISTIANS FORGET THEIR FATHER'S HOUSE. Because—1. Our father's and our husband's house are quite contrary the one to the other. There is no reconciling them (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15). 2. As our husband's house is most honourable, so our father's is most base. 3. Because we will never apply ourselves to the way of our husband's house if we forget not our



father's house. While the hearts of the Israelites were set on the flesh-pots of Egypt, they could make no progress in their journey to Canaan. 4. Because it is the worst of houses. No wonder, for the devil, the worst of masters, is the master of the house. It is soul slavery. The fashions of the house are the very reverse of all that is good. The interests of the house are the dishonour of God, the ruin of mankind. The garb of the house is filthy rags, and the shame of their nakedness will at length appear before the world. IV. THOSE ARE TO BE REPROVED THAT WILL NOT FORGET THEIR FATHER'S HOUSE. And who are these? 1. They are those that in the midst of Gospel light continue in the darkness of the house; their father has put out their eyes (2 Cor. iv. 4). 2. Those that retain the language of the house. When Peter spoke the damsel knew what countryman he was. And what shall we say of thee who art a curser, swearer, liar, filthy speaker, but that thou art a Hellilean? I appeal to your own consciences what sort of language yours is. 3. Those that wear the badge of the house on their breasts, the master of the house's mark on their forehead. Profane people. You who will not pray. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." 4. Those that give up themselves to the trade of the house, minding nothing but the world, earthly things. They know not communion with God. 5. Those that are the hidden servants of the house. It has been said of some that they have stolen away to heaven without being observed; but there are others that steal away to hell, and the world never hears the sound of their feet: even deep-veiled hypocrites, whited sepulchres. (*Ibid.*) *The youthful Christian exposed to the hostility of ungodly relatives and the world*:—The words of our text apply specially to Christ and His redeemed Church. But I take the words in a large general sense, as applicable to all who would be interested in the Redeemer. And the force of them in that sense is this, that no earthly relation, however near and however beloved—no earthly interest, however valuable and however important—must come between you and God. A strange method this (it may not unnaturally occur to your minds) of recommending religion! to tell you that it may perhaps expose you to the sorest crucifixion of natural feelings and to the most painful sacrifices. And—I. THERE EVER HAS BEEN, AND THERE EVER WILL BE, AN INCONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE GODLY. True, you may escape this opposition by dispensing with the seriousness of mind which religion produces. Keep only to the form of religion and the world will not complain. But its subjects are so momentous, so overwhelming, and its joy so tempered with solemnity, that they who know the power of religion will have the least relish for the frivolous pleasures of this world. Religion hangs so loosely on many that it gives no offence. It stands in no one's way. They can be all things to all men. Such persons are safe from the world. But if you will not be such as these, there is no alternative but to reckon on the opposition of the world and its friends. II. SOME OF THE SITUATIONS IN WHICH CHRISTIAN SINCERITY WILL BE TRIED. 1. In the first place, they may be deserted by friends and relatives. Even those on whom they depend for support may turn against them and cast them off. 2. They may be tempted to sin. They may be sorely plagued by the ungodly. "Righteous Lot" of old "was vexed with the filthy conversation" of the wicked in Sodom; and there are innumerable ways in which the men of the world may tempt and injure the godly. 3. They may be despised. To be religious is thought mean and low. Now, some particular duty which shall mark them out as Christians may have to be performed. It is performed, and so draws the gaze and the contempt of all around. This is hard to bear. But it must be borne. Have you repented of your choice? (*John Young M.A.*)

Ver. 11. *So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.*—*The beauty of the Church desired by Christ*:—I. THE BELIEVER'S BEAUTY. 1. It is all derived, and not natural. Our Lord Jesus first makes men beautiful through His comeliness put upon them, and then He commends and takes pleasure in the works of His own hands (Ezek. xvi. 14). (1) The believer is covered with the rich and ornamenting robe of the righteousness of His glorious surety. He is "clothed with the garments of salvation" (Isa. lxi. 10). (2) The believer is also "all glorious within," by the working of the Holy Spirit. His heart and affections ascend heavenward. (3) The believer is fair and beautiful in respect of his outward conversation. The truly godly do not talk and walk at random: "Honey and milk are under their tongue," and they endeavour through grace to set the Lord always before them, and to regulate every part of their conduct according to the rule of His Word.

2. What are some of the qualities of the believer's beauty? (1) It is a derived beauty. (2) It is real (Cant. iv. 1). The judgment of Christ concerning His children, and the world's opinion of them, are very different. (3) It is of a spiritual nature, His adorning is the hidden man of the heart (1 Pet. iii. 4). (4) It is of a growing and increasing nature (Prov. iv. 18; Rom. viii. 13). Every new discovery that the believer gets of the King in His beauty by the eye of faith, in the glass of his own word, adds to his spiritual beauty, and carries him forward to a further degree of likeness and conformity to Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18). (5) The Lord Jesus will perfect the beauty of His Bride and Spouse in due time. The beauty of a believer is perfect as to parts in the day of regeneration (2 Cor. v. 17); and he that hath once begun the good work of beautifying a soul with salvation will finish it (Phil. i. 6).

II. THE DELIGHT WHICH THE LORD JESUS IS PLEASED TO TAKE IN THE BELIEVER'S BEAUTY. 1. He does so by looking upon it with pleasure and delight. He beholds the upright with a pleasant countenance (Ps. xi. 17). We see with what pleasure he beheld the integrity of Nathaniel (John i. 47). And as He looks upon the beauty of His people with delight, so He is never more taken with it than when they are entertaining the lowest thoughts of themselves. 2. He does so by commending it (Job. i. 8; Cant. ii. 14). 3. Christ evidences great delight in the beauty of His people by keeping company with them, and admitting them to the enjoyment of sweet fellowship and communion with Himself (Rev. iii. 20). 4. He evidences the pleasure and delight which He takes in the beauty of His people, by letting them into the knowledge of these things which are hid from the men of the world (Ps. xxv. 14). 5. He evidences His delight and complacency in the beauty of His people by the many endearing characters and designations which He gives them; such as, His Sister, His Spouse, His Love, His Dove, His undefiled, etc. 6. He does so by the honourable services He employeth His people in. He, as it were, ornaments Himself with them (Isa. lxii. 3). 7. Christ evidences His desire of, and delight in, the beauty of His people by intimating His will to the Father, that they may be admitted to be where He is after they have served their generation according to His will in the present world (John xvii. 24).

III. USE. 1. For information. (1) We may infer that man is by nature vile and loathsome in the sight of an holy God, and so liable to the Divine displeasure; he has lost the glorious and beautiful image of God that was instamped upon him in his first creation by his fall in the first Adam. (2) Hence, see what it is that can render a man truly beautiful and comely in the sight of God; it is his being clothed with the righteousness of His Son, and His being made a partaker of the grace of His Spirit. (3) Hence, see how it is that any come actually to partake of the beauty of holiness, and that is in their being espoused to Christ. (4) Is our Lord Jesus pleased to take complacency and delight in the beauty of His people? Then we may see how careful and diligent they should be to become still more desirable in His eye by growing in likeness and conformity to Him. (5) Hence, see that believers in Christ need not be much moved on account of the disrespect and contempt which a carnal world is disposed to cast upon them. (6) We may see matter of reproof to all such as are instrumental in marring the beauty of the Church, whether by persecution, error in doctrine, neglect of discipline, or by perverting the exercise of it, or by the introduction of human inventions into the worship of God. 2. For trial and examination. Are you possessed of that beauty that is amiable in the sight of Christ? If so, we think that you have seen your natural blackness and deformity; if ever you saw yourselves in the glass of the holy law set before you by the Spirit, this must have been the case with you. You have seen and felt an utter inability in yourselves to acquire that beauty that is pleasing to Christ. But again, if you are partakers of this beauty that is so desirable to Christ, then your remaining sin and deformity is your burden. In a word, if you are blessed with the begun participation of spiritual beauty, it is your real concern to have it increased and perfected. You are sensible there is much lacking in it (Phil. iii. 13). 3. For exhortation. (1) As to you who are the children and people of God, and whom He has begun to beautify with His salvation, we exhort you to bless the Lord for His goodness to you; for His works of wonder done, both for you and in you; though you were once lying among the pots, yet mercy has lifted you up. To be upon your guard against everything that tends to stain your beauty. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. "Be not conformed to this world." (T. Bennet.) **For He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.**—*Religious worship*.—I. ITS NATURE. 1. Its internal principles. There must be reverence, and this in the highest degree, because of its object. Not terror,

but sacred awe and delight. And there must be also deep humiliation, for we are sinful creatures. Anything like self-satisfaction and complacency must be offensive to God. See parable of Pharisee and Publican. And such humility has ever characterized God's true worshippers. Another principle of worship for fallen man must be trust in atonement. No acceptable worship ever was presented but through sacrifice. The history of Cain and Abel illustrates this. And thus is it now. All access to God is by the sacrifice of Christ. Then there must be submission. See the attendant seraphim whom Isaiah saw in his vision of "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up." They were engaged in reverential worship. Another principle is love. Not gratitude alone, but supreme affection delighting in God. 2. Its external manifestations. And here we have—(1) Acts, such as prayer, thanksgiving, commemoration, sitting before the Lord to hear His word, which is a real act of worship, and not as some thoughtlessly say, to be distinguished from it. (2) Places—the closet, the family, the church and the great assembly. II. THE GROUND AND REASON OF WORSHIP. "For He is thy Lord." This declares—1. The Divine greatness, for the Lord of the Church is Lord of all. 2. His absolute dominion over us. That dominion extends to our being, and to all by which our being can be supported. All the blessings of life are by Him distributed, withheld, restricted, or multiplied, or withdrawn. Our felicity is from the light of His countenance; our pain from the pressure of His hand. 3. He is our Lord legislatively. He has given us a law to obey, a law holy, just and good. And He has sanctioned it by the penalty of eternal death. But as we have broken the law, all the more reason wherefore we should worship. 4. But to the Church especially it may be said, "He is thy Lord." For the Church is a society of such as are actually reconciled to God by Jesus Christ; it is the separated company of pardoned believers. And to this company He stands in the special relation of a gracious Sovereign. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP. We speak now only of public worship. For the proclamation of the great fundamental truths of religion. This, therefore, has ever been felt to be a duty. Good men have struggled, not for mere freedom of opinion, but of worship. Let us uphold the worship of God. Beware of a careless formal service. Seek in it to be increasingly spiritual. (R. Watson.) *The duty of all to pay divine worship and homage to Christ:—*

I. THE DESIGNATION THE FATHER HERE GIVES TO CHRIST. "He is thy Lord." 1. This designation implies that there is a mutual relation between Christ and the Church: He is her Lord, and she His servant; He her King, she His subject; He her Head, she His member; He her Husband, she His spouse. 2. It implies His eminency in the Church. Whatever persons come into it He alone is Lord and Sovereign there. 3. It implies His sovereign power and authority in and over the Church. He is the sole Lawgiver to the Church (Isa. xxxiii. 22). He is the great Speaker in the Church, to whom alone she owes the hearing of faith (Matt. xvii. 5). Yea, so large and extensive is His dominion, that it reaches to heaven, earth and hell (Rev. i. 18). 4. It implies that it is the indispensable duty of the Church, and every particular member thereof, to yield cheerful and ready obedience to the will of Christ in whatever He is pleased to command. 5. It implies that our Lord Jesus has the burden and care of the Church lying wholly upon Him. 6. It implies that He is God equal with the Father and Holy Spirit. "He is thy Lord," faith the Father to, the Church, "and worship thou Him." II. IN WHAT RESPECTS JESUS CHRIST MAY BE CALLED LORD OF THE CHURCH. 1. He is so by the designation and appointment of God the Father, who saith concerning Him (Ps. ii. 8). 2. He is so in virtue of His own actual compliance with the Father's designation of Him to that charge (Ps. xl. 6, 7; Isa. l. 5). 3. Jesus Christ is the Church's Lord by purchase and conquest; He is her Lord-Redeemer, both by price and by power. He has purchased the Church at the costly price of His own precious blood (1 Pet. i. 18). 4. He is Lord in and over the Church, as He is her Husband and she His spouse. 5. He is Lord in and over the Church by her own consent. 6. He is Lord of the Church, inasmuch as it is from Him that she expects, and is to enjoy the reward, when her service in this world is accomplished (2 Thess. iv. 7, 8). III. THE WORSHIP AND HOMAGE WHICH THE CHURCH OWES TO CHRIST AS HER LORD. IV. USE. 1. For information. (1) Hence, see that the Church is a highly dignified society. (2) Is Jesus Christ Lord in and over the Church? Then we may see the sin and danger of usurping any of the prerogatives which belong to Him by adding to, or taking from, His institutions. (3) Hence, see with what care and diligence the Church and every particular member thereof should, in their places and stations, strive together for the faith of the Gospel. 2. For trial and

examination. (1) What acquaintance have you got with Christ as your Lord and Redeemer? (2) How are you pleased with the laws of Christ by which He rules His subjects? (3) What think ye of Christ—of His person, of His love, His righteousness, offices and fulness; in all these He is truly precious to them who believe. (4) Of what quality is your obedience to the royal law of Christ? Is it of an evangelical nature? Does it spring from faith in Him, love to Him, and a tender regard to His authority displayed therein? 8. For exhortation. (1) We exhort you who have been brought, by the power of grace to take Christ for your Lord, "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord." (2) We exhort you who are strangers to Christ, and so in a state of rebellion against Him, to consider the woeful condition you are in. (*T. Bennet.*) *Worship*:—Praise and thanksgiving are the two necessary elements in all worship. We praise God for what He is—love, mercy, patience, justice, power, these are but some of the attributes of the Deity, and the more we realize their extent the more unfeignedly shall we praise Him. We offer up our thanksgivings for all that He has given and is giving us; material and spiritual blessings have been given to us so abundantly that we must be amazingly blind or monstrously ungrateful if our thanksgivings do not daily ascend to our loving Father. Worship is of immeasurable value to ourselves; it has a transforming power, in that it ever directs our thoughts away from ourselves outwards to our God. Besides this, the more our thoughts are uplifted in worship the more we shall grow like the God we worship. A Greek writer has told us of a temple at the entrance of which hung a magic mirror; every worshipper on entering the temple glanced into the mirror, and there saw himself in the very likeness of the God he worshipped. The legend but dimly veils a great truth; why do we love to see our children true hero-worshippers? Is it not because we believe they will become more and more like the hero they respect so intensely? We ourselves delight in the companionship of a noble, heroic character. Or it may be we look back with thankfulness to the time we spent in such an one's company; and why is the memory so sweet? We found a new strength through that friendship; in some degree we became like our friend. So, with humble, adoring love, we worship the God who condescends to be our friend, in the glorious expectation of gradually attaining to His likeness. So worship is to transform the various chequered experiences of our daily life, and even while it does so it shall transform our whole characters, till we "come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In our worship do we praise God because we daily prove what He is? Is our worship the outward expression of the faith and loyalty we show every day of our lives, or is it but the expression of virtues which should exist in us, but are never manifest? What does God see? Our worship should inspire us, should brighten the dark hours of our lives, nay, should even transform our lives by the "renewing of our minds." Have we to confess that our worship is not a power in our lives, doesn't cheer us when in sorrow, perplexity or temptation, doesn't draw us closer to our God? What does God see? (*A. Aitken.*)

**Ver. 12. The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.**—*Gentile sinners coming into the Church and presenting themselves a free-will offering to the Lord upon the Gospel altar*:—I. SOME THINGS IMPLIED IN THE WORDS. 1. That whatever be the outward lot and condition of a person or people, before the Lord is pleased to visit them with a dispensation of the Gospel, their case is truly melancholy, and affecting. When it is said, "the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift," it supposes that her then present state was a state of distance from God and the ordinary means of gracious intercourse with Him. 2. That it is by the special providence of God that persons or nations are brought into the fellowship of the Gospel. 3. That it is a very great privilege to have a place in God's house. Those who are within the Church enjoy all the ordinary means of salvation. II. THE GIFT WHICH PERSONS PRESENT TO THE LORD IN THE DAY OF THEIR EFFECTUAL CALLING. 1. Men give themselves to the Lord in the day of their regeneration and effectual vocation. This is the principal gift, and that without which nothing which they can present to Him can possibly be accepted. What is it for persons to give themselves unto the Lord? We answer—(1) It is to give up the soul in all its powers and faculties to the Lord, to be employed in His service. (2) They likewise give up their bodies to the Lord. The eye to behold His works, and look into His Word, so as to affect the heart. The ear to hear and listen to His voice; the hand to work with an eye to His glory; the feet to run His errands; and the tongue to speak to, and for,

God, and confess Him before the world. (3) All that the man is, and hath, is contained in this gift. III. SPEAK OF PERSONS PRESENTING THAT GIFT UNTO THE LORD. 1. Mention some things imported in a person or people, their giving themselves to the Lord. (1) This exercise of a person or people, their giving themselves to the Lord, imports their discerning, and taking up the ground and warrant that they have to do so, and that is, the Lord's giving and making over Himself to them in the word of grace and promise as their God in Christ. (2) A person or people, their giving themselves to the Lord, imports an humble and hearty acknowledgment that they have formerly been under the power and dominion of other lords and lovers (Isa. xxxvi. 13). (3) It imports a real persuasion of His having an undoubted right to them and their services. (4) It has in it the person's withdrawing his allegiance from his former lords and lovers; his revoking and calling back the gift which he had made of himself and his service to Satan, the god of this world. (5) It imports a cordial embracing and receiving a God in Christ as their God and portion. Their taking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as their God and Father, according to His promise (Jer. iii. 19). (6) It imports an unshaken purpose and resolution, through grace, to keep by the Lord and cleave to Him for better and worse. 2. Inquire for what ends and purposes persons give themselves to the Lord in the day of their effectual calling. (1) Sinners give themselves to the Lord in the day of their effectual calling, their hearts being touched by grace, in compliance with the end and design of the glorious Gospel, which is to bring sinners that are ready to perish in the far country of a natural state home to God, as their God and Father in Christ. (2) With an eye to their own safety. (3) That they may be henceforth employed in His service (Acts ix. 6; Ps. cxvi. 16). (4) To be led and guided through an ensnaring world by the good skill of His hand. (5) That He may keep them by His almighty power, through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. i. 5). IV. ILLUSTRATE THE TRUTH OF THE DOCTRINE. 1. Though there were none who set themselves in greater opposition to the Lord Jesus and the grace of God manifested in Him than the Jews, yet three thousand of them were added to the Church in one day (Acts ii. 87-42). 2. The success which the Gospel has already had among the Gentile nations. V. USE. 1. For trial and examination. (1) If you have really given yourselves to the Lord, "you have accepted of God in Christ for Himself, and that without making any conditions about peace and prosperity and freedom from trouble in this world"; but you gave yourself to Him without any reserve. (2) If you have really given yourselves to the Lord, it was with much affection you did so (Jer. ii. 2). If you have given yourselves to the Lord, it was in a marriage-covenant. (3) If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you cannot fail to admire His love and condescension to you in His giving Himself to you, in the word of grace and promise, and determining you to give yourselves to Him. (4) If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you will be frequently recognizing that deed; yea, it will be habitually in your minds, and often upon the imagination of the thoughts of your hearts. (5) If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you have a high esteem and valuation of Himself, and of everything that stands connected with Him. 2. For consolation to all who have been determined to give themselves to the Lord. They are in a state of happy condition; they have made the Most High their habitation; and therefore no real evil can befall them, neither any plague come near their dwelling. 3. For exhortation. (1) As for you, then, who have been determined, by grace, to give yourselves to the Lord, we exhort you to bless the great and glorious name of the Lord your God, that He hath been graciously pleased so to shine into your hearts as to give you the saving knowledge of Himself, and bowed your rebellious wills unto a cordial yielding of yourselves unto the Lord, and so hath caused you to enter into His sanctuary which He hath sanctified for ever. We exhort you to be ever mindful whose you are, and to whom you have devoted yourselves and your services. When Satan, the world and the remaining corruptions of your flesh would seek to entice and draw you aside from the service of God, be exhorted to tell them that you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and that you cannot, and, through grace, will not, go back. We exhort you who have really given yourselves to the Lord to use your best endeavours to excite and influence others to go and do likewise. (T. Bennet.)

Ver. 13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within.—The King's daughter glorious within and clothed with a garment of wrought gold:—I. THE BELIEVER'S INWARD GLORY.* 1. All true believers have a glorious life. They live a life of

justification, a life of holiness, and of sweet fellowship with God. 2. Believers have a glorious understanding and knowledge of God and Divine things. They have all received a heart to know God as their God in Christ; and that knowledge is eternal life begun. 3. Believers have a glorious conformity to and compliance with the will of God, wrought in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. 4. All true believers have a precious faith in, and a glorious love to, God in Christ implanted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. 5. Believers have a glorious inward peace (Rom. v. 1), a peace that "passeth knowledge," a peace that the world knows not of, and which it can neither give nor take away. 6. Believers are possessed of a glorious joy and spiritual gladness. They stand by faith upon the sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). 7. Believers are possessed of a meek and humble frame of heart and spirit, which is a great ornament to the soul in the sight of God; and is accordingly said to be of great price in His esteem (1 Pet. iii. 4).

II. THE APPAREL WHEREWITH THE BELIEVER IS CLOTHED. "Wrought gold." 1. What we are to understand by it. All true believers are daughters of the King; they are chaste virgins, being espoused to His Son. They are a peculiar people; they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations. 2. Its excellence. (1) It is of an infinite value and worth, being "the righteousness of God" (Rom. i. 17). It is a righteousness of God's providing. The glorious Person who wrought out this righteousness is God (Rom. ix. 5); and the applier of it is God the Holy Ghost. (2) It is of a durable and lasting nature. (3) It is a garment for glory and for beauty. (4) It is perfect and unsullied. III. USE. 1. For information. (1) Hence, see what a great and wonderful change, union to the person of Christ makes in the case of a poor, guilty, polluted sinner. (2) Hence, see that imputed righteousness and inherent holiness go hand in hand together; where the one is, there is also the other. (3) Hence, see what a precious thing the Gospel is; and how highly it ought to be had in estimation by all who enjoy it in purity. It reveals and brings the clothing of wrought gold near to the naked and starving soul (Isa. xlv. 11, 12). (4) Hence, see that when one grace is implanted in the heart, there all grace is to be found. (5) We may hence see the difference between the true believer and the hypocrite. The latter may have as fair an outside as the former; but he has no inward glory. (6) Hence see who they are that are truly the excellent ones of the earth. They are not those whom the world generally takes to be so; nor those who are most disposed to account themselves so; but the truly excellent and honourable persons are those who are clothed in the robe of wrought gold, the embroidered garment of Immanuel's righteousness, and made glorious within. These are the men whom the King hath highly advanced, and whom He delights to honour. (*T. Bennet.*)

*The internal glory of the King's daughter:*—The spiritual union that exists between Christ and His Church is here beautifully described. Within her pale were to be found in future ages the noble, the learned and the great. Kings' daughters were to tread her courts and defend her bulwarks. Her territory was to be enlarged, for the "daughter of Tyre" was to be there as pre-figurative of that vast and large accession of heathen nations to the profession of the Christian faith. I. GOD'S GLORY IS DISPLAYED IN HER AS HIS RESIDENCE AND PLACE OF HABITATION. Transcendent on this account are the glory and beauty of the Church, which is called "the city of God" (Ps. xlv. 4). In this city God dwells—"God is in the midst of her" (Psa. xlv. 5); and she cannot but be glorious, because God delights in her for man's good: He is represented as "loving the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. xlviii. 2). The Church is described as "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth" (Ps. xlviii. 2). Yea, "glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God" (Ps. lxxxvii. 3). Christ has secured to His Church the perpetuity of His presence by His own unalterable words (Matt. xxviii. 20). The Church is the depository of God's Word (1 Tim. iii. 15). "The Church is a witness and a keeper of holy writ" (Art. 20); and by her is manifested "all the glory of the Godhead in the face of Jesus Christ." Angels above and men below consider His salvation of His people glorious (Luke xv. 7). "The unsearchable riches of Christ" are preached, "to the intent that now unto the principalities," etc. (Eph. iii. 10). God does not now answer His people in a visible way, by Urim and Thummim, but yet in a real and effectual way, "drawing nigh to them that draw nigh to Him"; and, though God be neglected and forgotten and despised, yet "He is known in her palaces for a refuge" (Ps. xlviii. 3).—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlv. 1).

II. THE KING'S DAUGHTER IS ALL GLORIOUS WITHIN BECAUSE GOD'S CHILDREN ARE

**BORN IN HER.** The figure of being "all glorious within" is, no doubt, taken from the splendour of Eastern palaces. The Asiatic queens, sultanas and begums scarcely ever appeared in public. They remained, as they do to the present day, in their harems, amidst splendid and gorgeous decorations. In the former part of the psalm are described the excellencies of God—in the latter part the excellencies of God's Church. Now, whether we speak of the Church collectively, or of individual believers, their graces, their gifts, and their holiness, are the fruits of Christ's passion and the work of the Holy Ghost, who renews the heart and rectifies the will. "Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6). When a man is born again from above, he is accepted of God in the Beloved; Christ's righteousness covers his past sins, and gives him a title to heaven. But the work does not stop here. Along with the title to heaven given to the believer in justification, there is also wrought in his heart a meetness for heaven by sanctification. And what a privilege is this! Satan is trodden down under foot; the old man is supplanted by the new man; a depraved nature gives way to a divine nature; the image of Christ is imprinted on the heart; the believer is made like his Lord and Master—is changed from glory to glory. Now, whence is the source of all these blessings? They proceed from the King of the Church—from Him who has adopted the Church to be His daughter. With this agrees the language of the apostle (1 Cor. i. 30). God is the Church's glory; her honour, her wisdom and her grace proceed from Him who is, and shall be, the praise of the redeemed for ever. **III. THE KING'S DAUGHTER IS ALL GLORIOUS, BECAUSE SHE IS EMBLEMATIC OF HEAVEN ITSELF.** Surely, when we are robed in Christ's righteousness and blessed with His salvation, we shall go to the Church triumphant, of which the Church militant is a type, and has a rich foretaste. When the Church of Christ is fully prepared, she will at last be presented to God without spot. The union begun on earth will be satisfied and avowed in the King's palace in heaven. Then will it be shouted through the universe (Rev. xix. 7). Then will there be a jubilee on earth; and then will the angels tune their golden harps to joyous hallelujahs in the heavens. The Church of God will then be complete; "she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," etc. Then will angels rejoice; then will prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and saints in glory sing (Rev. v. 13). Surely the Church is an emblem of heaven; for all who are born in her "are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 22). The temple of God on earth and His temple in heaven are two parts of one glorious whole. They enjoy distinctions far above any earthly temple. Of our earthly Zion it is said (Isa. lx. 19). And thus it is also in the heavenly Zion (Rev. xxi. 23). It is but one family inhabiting both the one city and the other, even the family of our Lord Jesus Christ; and their employments are altogether the same; for whilst the one "are rejoicing in the Lord always" here below, the other are incessantly engaged in singing praises to Him above—even to "Him who loved them," etc. (Rev. i. 5, 6). (*E. Strickland, M.A.*) *The beauty of the King's Daughter*:—It has happened sometimes that persons of royal birth have not known their high rank. It was so with the founders of the great empire of Rome. Through jealousy two young princes were exposed on the banks of a river. After going through a strange experience they were found by a shepherd, whose simple, homely wife brought them up in her cottage as her own sons. Not till they were grown up did they discover their royal origin, and then together they founded Rome. Like them, some of us have never dreamt that we were king's daughters. Some smile incredulously at the very idea. But it is a fact that every one of us may be a king's daughter (2 Cor. vi. 18; Rom. viii. 29; Matt. xii. 50). Then what a comfort to remember that since we are the King's daughters His wealth is ours. The King, our Father, has wonderful resources. There is one word of warning I would like to say. Many folk, when they are in trouble, say, "Oh yes, if I trust in God, it will be all right. I must trust Him; there's no one else to trust to." But they forget that if they want to claim God's fatherly provision they must live as His daughters. Then, the King's daughter is "all glorious within." She is not a sham. Mere outside goodness is not enough. The mind must be cleansed from all evil imaginations, the affections withdrawn from all wrong objects. If we nurse and foster any heart sin we are dead to our high privilege as the King's daughters, for they are all glorious within. You notice the clothing is of "wrought gold." Trouble has been taken with it, it has been worked or wrought. And it is made of gold, it is durable, it will stand the testing fires. Let us take more trouble to make our garment of lifework durable and

beautiful. And then the King's daughter is to be brought "in raiment of needle-work." Day by day we are putting in the stitches. Every word, every act is a stitch making or marring the beauty of the whole. Those mistaken stitches can never be drawn out. Then take the marred work to the King now, by faith place it in His hands, tell Him just how you feel about it; and you will find that for the truly contrite soul filled with sorrow and regret for past failures the King has a marvellous fashion of beautifying spoilt work, and covering the ugly stitches with His own embroidery of love. And let us remember that beauty comes from "within." Paint and powder do not make beauty. Health and goodness do. Made beautiful "within," we shall be enabled to express the inner life in a consistent and beautiful outward life which may well be compared to wrought gold and embroidered work. (Anon.) *The King's daughters*:—1. The bridegroom is Jesus Himself; Solomon is but His type. The Church that is without wrinkle or spot, or any such thing is the beautiful bride. She is possessed of all those graces of heart and mind as well as of person which would incline the king to rejoice in her beauty. 2. Not unsuited to this occasion are allusions to this beautiful psalm. Before us we see the virgins that should be the attendants of the bride of Christ, the king's daughters who should be her honourable women. It is their vocation to do her honour, to lend additional though reflected lustre to her court. Whatever of beauty is theirs; whatever of grace and winning ways; whatever gives them influence or power in the Church or in the world—they are all the attributes that better qualify them for the duties of their high station. There may well be, there should be, gifts of gold, the fragrance of myrrh, aloes and cassia, beautiful forms and features, shining eyes, and ivory palaces at the marriage of the king's son. They are, however, the accidents and not the essential attributes of the virgins who are worthy to wait upon the spouse of Christ; like her, they must be all glorious within. No age ever excelled that of Pericles in all the arts that give softness and refinement to life. Painting, sculpture, the genius of Phidias and Praxiteles, the pencil of Zeuxis; the temple of the virgin goddess, with its elegant proportions and its carved façade, even in ruins one of the wonders of the world; poetry, oratory—all illustrated it and adorned it. The splendour of its court has passed into a proverb. Aspasia presided over it, wonderful for her wit, and beauty, and grace, yea, for her wisdom and learning, the confidante and counsellor of statesmen and kings. Her intellect, as her person, had been cultivated to its utmost limit; in that respect she was the paragon of her sex. But what age was more corrupt than that of Pericles? Aspasia herself, the education of her moral nature and of her heart neglected, was a wreck; as the poet says, "one of those shameless women who are the worst of men." She was a splendid monument of what the unsanctified can be and do. Her clothing was of wrought gold, but she was not worthy to be a daughter of the King, for she was not all glorious within. No regard was paid to her complex being; her nature was distorted, and in the absence of virtue and religion she was not an unmeet prototype of many of the discrowned women of our own age. When you increase the capacity of the intellect and dwarf the moral nature, you produce not symmetry and grace, but spiritual deformity. There is in all true education a law of proportion; the mind, the heart, the body, must all be cultured if we would have a truly cultured man. 3. Therefore it is, O daughters of the Church! that we rejoice with you on this anniversary; therefore do we feel in the deep of our heart the munificence which has provided for you this sequestered and beautiful retreat, where learning is to be for ever the handmaid of religion. Religion has made woman what she is. It has lifted her out of the slough of slavery and placed her upon a pedestal where she commands the admiration and love of the world; it has given her a potent influence in moulding its destiny. Deprive her of it, and she would fall back into the starless night whence she was so long emerging. Her clothing may be of wrought gold, she may be all covered with barbaric pearl; but only as she is a daughter of the King can she be all glorious within. (G. F. Cushman.) *The king's daughter*:—Here are two aspects of the king's daughter—the internal and the external; within all glorious, without covered with wrought gold—a magnificent congruity, a spiritual miracle of consistency. "Glorious," not commonplace; separated from every other institution or mode of life by a dazzling, gleaming brightness above the shining of the sun. "All glorious"—not one shadow, not one indication of love of darkness. "All glorious" in doctrine, in conduct, in speech, in thought, in the innermost recesses of the heart—"all glorious within." Why? Because of a conscious realization of the Divine presence. Have we made our



preparation for the Chief of Guests? Has the housewife made no arrangement to receive her visitor with becoming care and distinction? Mystery of mysteries is this, that the mortal can talk with the Eternal; that the creature can commune with the Creator; that a life so low that presently it will be cut down and burned like grass in the oven can go right up to eternal Kingliness and say, Let us commune together concerning the mystery of being and the mystery of destiny, the mystery of conduct and the mystery of service; O Eternal King, let poor me talk with Thee a long time! Out of this must come a growing solicitude to be transformed into the Divine likeness. What is the king's daughter without? Look at her clothing; that will answer the inquiry—"Her clothing is of wrought gold." The internal glory is proved by the external beauty. There is a clothing which we are called upon to admire—the clothing of the king's daughter is of wrought gold: no dress can be too beautiful if it express a beautiful character. We are not to be too literal in our construction of these sentences—there is a transfiguring process of soul upon cloth, if you will have it so; there is a possibility that a carpenter's raiment may become white and glistering. The internal light illumines the external robe. Here is a man who has been a long time in prayer; he comes down the hill as morning might come down the quickly illuminated mountain; speak to the man, and he wists not that his face doth shine. This is the beauty of heaven; this is not formal beauty; this is the light that springeth from within, which will be as beauteous in the morning as it is at night, in the winter as in the summer; how trying soever the circumstances through which the man may pass, he will throw a sacred radiance upon his whole condition, and make a space for himself by the power of wisdom. Sometimes we have seen a man surrounded by estates, and have felt that the man was greater than the property; we have said, What a soul this man has! Listen to his thoughts, hear his conversation; presently he will rise into prayer, or utter himself in sacred song, or speak lovingly and redeemingly about the poor and those who have no helper; and then the environment falls away into its right perspective, and we say, Would God this man owned the whole world! for then the poor would be made to rejoice, and the sad of heart would know what a friend they had. If there is any disparity it should be on the spiritual side, so that we shall say concerning a man, however much he has, he ought to have more; he is a faithful steward, a generous administrator; appoint him the guardian of society. In the costume as described by the poet we have no contradiction, no irony, no sense of incongruity; we have a massive, simple, beautiful, beneficent consistency. What is the miracle that Jesus Christ wants to work? It is the miracle of congruity, the miracle of harmony, the miracle of music; it is to make us internally right that He may make us externally beautiful and noble. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.—Christian succession.**—An intelligent grasp of this truth is fatal to pessimists, who go about the country crying failure in the Church and the final defeat of Israel. King Jesus and His bride are the objects of the prophecy. Unto them were born apostles whose successors are filling the whole earth with princes who have power with God and men.

**I. REMOVALS ARE IMPLIED**—a thought too painful for publicity if treated in the absence of Christian promise. Did death end all, it would be sad indeed; but under the light of the Gospel death is translated into the realm of departure. By these removals we lose the friendships of time and stand alone waiting for new and untried friends. We lose the benefit of tried friendship so that life is a scene of unending and unanswered questioning. And yet we are confronted by this law in every department of fruit-bearing life. If we walk in nature's garden we find the same law dismissing all that is beautiful and fruitful; when once the work is done the fruits appear and are crowded off to give place to others. The Christian removal is always enlargement of influence. Paul ministered to a few hundred while in the flesh, but on taking his departure, ministered to the nations of the earth with increasing influence age after age. But there is blessing to us who succeed them. It is necessary to the highest order of life that there be discipline in care and thought, not that a few think for the race, and work for all, but that all work, think, and feel responsible for results. Thank God, then, though Abraham died, his faith lives for others to exercise—if Elijah goes up, Elisha can part the Jordan. And when the fathers go, God is calling children to take their place.

**II. PRIVILEGE OF THE CHILDREN.** Wave on wave rolls in from the ocean world and breaks on the same rocks ignorant of their successor's power. The baptism of

summer glory finds the bare poles where last spring found them. It cannot retain the summer glory and meadow's beauty. But it is our privilege to begin where the fathers retired, and from the outlook of centuries look out over the field before entering the fight. Ours to take the battle where the warfare of centuries has carried it and then on to victory, entering into the conquests of our fathers with the advantage of their experience. History records the wonders of the three hundred cavalymen in the Theban army, who were always successful. They fought under a vow of eternal loyalty. They were known as "The Sacred Battalion," the "Band of Lovers." Has not the Church greater claims upon us as legatees?

III. POSSIBILITIES. "Princes in all the earth." The gift of a child or convert is the gift of possibilities. "Mayest" implies attention, interest in, a work for the new-comer. If princes, we must study the child, his disposition, methods of thought, adaptations to different kinds of work. You can recall readily business firms, where the death of the head would close the house; not because there are no sons, but the sons have no knowledge of the father's business. Do you not call to mind churches where ten deaths would close the church? For these ten have given all the money; another ten have done all the praying, all because no part is assigned the children, and they are ill-fitted to take up the work. Socrates once said, "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim—Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all?" If our children are to be princes they must have some part in the work, some responsibilities. Let all pray, give, do and plan, then all will have an interest and grow therein. (H. W. Bolton, D.D.) *Fathers and children*:—In our fathers we live in the past; in our children we live in the future. For what we are and for what we have we are indebted to the past; the future as it springs from us will take its shape from the mould of doctrine and life into which we deliver it. It will reflect our image as we reproduce the lineaments of our ancestry. It is true in life as it is true in science that progress starts from record. There are two lights that shine upon our path; there is the steady light of experience shining from behind, and there is the fitful splendour of genius flashing upon the prospect before us. Both kinds of irradiation are equally necessary; the one to assure us of the ground we have won, the other to beckon us on to new conquests; and while we eagerly welcome any revelation of what is to come, we must not treat with neglect or even irreverence the genius of the past. We have here a responsibility equally divided between those who bequeath an estate and those who inherit it. The character and value of the estate will depend on the fathers; the improvement of it will rest with the children. The wisdom of parents may make their offspring princes; the neglect or folly of parents may make them slaves. On the other hand, the disobedience and wickedness of children may prevent them from coming to honour, and pervert rank to infamy and wealth to penury. Between the estate and the heir lies the great problem of education. Shall we make what we possess meet for the inheritance of our children? We have principles, doctrines, facts, and institutions. These are a vast patrimony. We received them from our fathers; we are about to transmit them to our children. They are not strictly the same as when they first came into our possession; the minds of a generation have been engaged upon them; they have been tested by the new exigencies of current life—some of them not surviving the test have perished, others live on in new forms of application; others have received additions which have expanded their use; a few are absolutely unchangeable, the revelation of God in Christ, the supremacy of truth, the principle of righteousness extending from the person to the community, the responsibility of conduct, these and such-like verities are the regulating forces of progress; they preserve the generations of men from drift; they are unalterable and indestructible. To make these treasures meet for the inheritance of our children let us bring them into view; they are invested and surrounded by semblances, they are hidden beneath prejudices, their just value is traversed by the false estimates of custom and traditions: let us separate the false from the true, and make our children see them as they are. There are men who seek to guide the thought of the age who would separate righteousness from God and divide life from Christ. There is a doctrine in circulation that would degrade the mind of man to the animal limits; there is a conspiracy of licence against the purity of family life. There is a greed that makes no other reckoning than its own dividends; the happiness of families, the fruits of industry, the morality of trade, the simplicity and the rights of defenceless races—all must go to

feed the rapacious lust of gain; and the nature of these monstrous errors, and the scandal and the hideousness of these crimes are concealed beneath the engaging raiment of fiction; they come into our homes dressed in the costume of civilization, and claiming even the sanctions of religion. It is a momentous question, How shall we guard our children from enemies which walk in darkness? We cannot organize a crusade against the literature we are now condemning. We must neutralize the poison of books by creating a new class of readers. We have power over the young. What an enormous responsibility is ours, as a nation, as Churches, as heads of families! We have in our hands the public opinion of the future. We have institutions in which the youth of these islands are taught to think, to choose the principles upon which the business of life should be carried on, and the faith which should be the rule of their conduct and the hope of their aspirations. A profounder saying never came from the lips of man than the dictum of Solomon, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The lessons of wisdom, however attractively set and earnestly delivered, will be of small avail to the child unless they come to his mind with the authority of the great Power who is above us all. A child's mind is in intimate sympathy with God. There is uppermost a religious nature during the years of childhood; the faith is without question, the fear without torments, the love without guile, and the imagination is quick to shape to itself the Father who is in heaven. Our Lord makes these qualities the cardinal conditions and signs of discipleship (Mark x. 15). And to take a child and induct him into the knowledge of life, of its duties and responsibilities, its dangers and its guards, its fellowships and the secrets of its success, without bringing God into it, without making Him the foundation of it all, anything more fatal to the morality, the greatness, nay to the existence of this nation I cannot conceive! Thank God for the conversion of a father or a child in a family circle, but we want to revolutionize the basis of family life. Enter the house of that working man; he will tell you that he joined a Band of Hope when he was a boy; that he grew up faithful to his pledge; that on the principles of that association he married, and is bringing up a family; that under his father's roof there was no home; there never had been a home within his recollection, for his father was the victim of drink. Instead of the father, here is the son, himself a father, building up a family, and not dragging it down; ruling his children and training them in the fear of the Lord; a citizen, and not a pauper, contributing to the wealth of his country, and not a burden upon her rates. Imagine the influences radiating from a home like this; imagine many such homes in the same street, in the same town, in the same country; every home a centre of order, a pattern of sobriety, a model of industry, and an ornament of religion. (*E. E. Jenkins, LL.D.*) *Young men—the nation and the Church of the future:—*The strength of a chain is the strength of each link, and the character of society is taken from the character of the individuals that compose it; therefore, on you, as constituent elements of the Church and the nation of the future, there does lie a solemn responsibility. I. If you would properly prepare yourselves for your future position, you must **GIVE YOURSELVES NOW TO THE CULTIVATION OF PERSONAL PIETY.** I place this at the foundation, because it is of supreme and permanent importance. II. **YOU MUST CULTIVATE INTELLIGENCE.** Even now there are symptoms of the most unmistakable kind that a crisis in the history of divine truth is approaching, and we would have our young men gird themselves to meet it. We find them for the most part trifling their time away in pursuits which, at the best, are but an excuse for idleness; and among too many, everything that would lead to reflection, and stimulate to thought, is accounted dull and stupid. I want you to be thinkers as well as readers; nay, thinkers rather than readers; for the mental disease of the age is just literary indigestion. Thus conducting your studies, you will thoroughly furnish yourselves as men of God, and will be enabled to stand undaunted before all comers. III. A third thing indispensably required, if you would meet the claims of the future on you, is **COURAGE.** By this I mean moral courage; the heroism, not of the warrior, but of the man who has learned to run the gauntlet of ridicule and scorn, and to follow the leadings of duty in the face of every obstacle. The large proportion of the rising race are growing up in moral weakness. How few of them can meet temptation with a direct negative! Be strong then, and quit you like men. Never mind though you may seem to stand alone; he who has God on his side is always in a majority; and he is never alone who can say, the Father is with me. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The generations old and new:—*I. **THE CONNECTEDNESS OF THE GENERATIONS.** What we do for our children

in respect of training, example and teaching is not wholly subject to their caprice. Through the strange bond which unites the generations they cannot altogether reject what is imparted any more than the ground can reject the seed cast into it. The thought that our labour and influence in rich effect may flow in the veins of the generation that comes after us removes the sadness of reflection upon the brevity of life. We may accept with cheerfulness the saying of Goethe: "A consciousness that our labour tends in some way to the lasting benefit of others makes the rolling years endurable." II. **THE RELATION OF THE YOUNG TO THE OLD.** As the sun in his setting behind the western horizon oftentimes casts a wondrous purple glow over the east whence he arose, making the glory of the evening of richer beauty than the brilliance of the noon, so does the generation whose life declines behind the overlasting hills shed its glow upon the generation just arising, suffusing it with a glory not from itself. Our glory lies in the achievements of our fathers. What, then, ought to be the attitude of the young toward the old? 1. **Reverence.** This spirit lies at the root of all nobility, purity, and strength of character. The glory of the past is summed up in our elders. There is that in the old which calls for reverence. (1) An old man is a book of life—an epitome of life's experience. If one should come to us from the weird mystery of the Arctic regions, or from the dim twilight of the dense and tropical forest, with what awe we should regard him! He is a man who has seen strange sights which we have not seen, and partaken of experiences beyond our imagination. Such is the old man to the young one. He has heard life's many voices, tasted its sweets and bitters, wrestled with its temptations, bowed under its sorrows, and discovered its illusions. He is a book of life, in which we ought to read with reverence. (2) He is a book of God. The record of human life is also a Divine record. This is true of the life that is evil; it is much more true of the life of pure goodness. As the star catches the light from some other world, and sends it down to illumine other spheres, so the good man has caught in his life the light of God, and flings it forth to enlighten younger minds around him. As such a revealer of God the old man commands our reverence. 2. **Patience.** You touch the heirloom with very gentle hand. It stands for you as the treasury of many sacred traditions of family history. So should the old forms of religious teaching. We may not be able to subscribe to every form of teaching we received; but let us remember that what was handed down to us made a noble woman of our mother and a monument of integrity of our father. It may not have been wholly true; it certainly was not wholly false, and therefore cannot be dismissed with a smile. We ought to be careful in the transfer of truth from old forms into new. You cannot empty the ointment from one vase into another without risk of losing some drops of the precious liquid. So there is always risk in adapting truth to its newer shapes lest we should lose some of its spirit. The old forms change and decay; but the spirit of truth is eternal, and for its sake, lest it should flee from careless and unhallowed touch, we should be patient with its dying body. 3. **Humility.** Our fathers were great; they who come after us will be greater. The revelation of God is a progressive unveiling. The pilgrim father with exultant insight said, "God has much more light to break from His holy Word." The world will not always grow with such painful slowness. Moral and spiritual forces will doubtless gain impetus, and will bear our world more quickly to her divine end. Meantime it is for those who are young to toil humbly, recognizing the labours of their fathers, and thankful if they may, in their generation, but add a share to the work which shall fulfil the Divine will. III. **THE RELATION OF THE OLD TO THE YOUNG.** "Every grave is also a cradle, every death is also a birth. He who puts a bud beside every withered leaf places a child beside the old man and a young man in the sepulchre of his father." In this way does God renew the life of the world. The attitude of the passing generation to the one succeeding it may be expressed under the same terms as the relationship we have already considered. 1. **Reverence.** It is most solemn to think of the germs of possibility that lie in the child: awful powers of good or evil lie enfolded within the little soul sent to dwell in our home for a while. Old men, having tasted the bitter disappointments of life, grow pessimistic, cold, cynical, and lose the clearness of their early visions. This can hardly be escaped; but let us be slow to impose these unhealthy influences on the fresh hopes of the young. The Church which checks the ardour of its young members by the half-cynical reminder of its illusions and failures, will thus put the frosty finger on the tender spring buds, and will doom them to die in an unnatural and wintry decay. For the hope of the world and of the Church, when the ancient blood is chilled and the pulse

enfeebled, we must look to the strong pulse, the warm impulse, and the high hopes of youth. "Your young men shall see visions." 2. Humility. Every generation passes away in disappointment. It has not realized its hopes, nor done the work it desired to do. Yet it is hard to confess this, and before death to see the work pass into younger hands and younger shoulders assume the responsibilities that have been ours. Our wisdom lies in humility. (*Anon.*) *Children instead of fathers*:—We can understand, by taking up the attitude of the Jewish mind, how very much there was in such a promise to occasion delight; but to our modern ears there is not the same sort of delight in the benediction which speaks of posterity. We might almost be disposed to challenge the value of the promise. From the standpoint of home we go back, and our hearts are touched with tender memories. We remember that once venerable figure. We remember how, when we were but children, he, forgetting the pressures and the anxieties of life, stooped to play with us in our infant hours. We recall how it was that wisdom allied with sympathy came to our aid, and how we found in him who bore the name of "father" a most venerable and trusted friend. And then we are told that we shall find in this cradle an adequate substitute for all that he was. Where is the benediction of such a change? And yet it is a blessing. We live under laws which are inevitable, invariable. The hour must come when we are obliged to accept the responsibility which the death of those who were dear has thrust upon us. Necessity, kindly nurse, stern mother, that cultivates human wit, that develops human character, forces us into situations where we are bound to become men. But it is not only in the order of the home that this prevails. It suggests to us that it is true in the order of the nation, of the community, and of the Church. There were fathers in Israel as well as fathers of our flesh—men who, in the days when we were young, and the first flush of our youthful enthusiasm was upon us, were hailed, as young life only knows how to hail, with an enthusiastic devotion and admiration. Can the cries of the cradle be an adequate substitute for the eloquent words which caused our hearts to burn? or shall we find in the unfurnished brain of the child anything like an adequate substitute and compensation for the well-furnished mind and the large sources of knowledge and learning which were ever consecrated to the welfare of the Church? And yet the very law of necessity which makes us see a benediction in the compulsion of work and gain in the responsibilities which are thrust upon us, may well also remind us that the ways of God are always beneficent. Larger, stronger, more tender because more stern is that love which says, "Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children." Instead of waiting and watching for the words of leaders, you must be prepared to become leaders yourselves. And it is well for Churches as it is well for men, it is well for nations as it is well for individuals that these things should be; for in the order of God, as He works His great work, He changes His implements. He lays aside the stonemason when the stone is set, that the sculptor may begin to adorn the temple of God. Elisha must follow Elijah; Joshua must take the place of Moses; and if we are wise, we shall understand that men reared in a younger generation, acclimatized, so to speak, for the efforts and difficulties of war by the new surroundings of fresh and progressive education, are fitted to take the place of trust if only they will be faithful to their God. They have opportunities of discharging before God and His Church that service which is called for, and of achieving in their day and in their generation the deliverance of the Lord's people. And thus from the standpoint, then, of the communities as well as from the standpoint of home this benediction is realized, "Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children." There is this principle, then, underlying. There is a benediction in responsibility; but responsibility may fail to bring us its blessing unless we are ready for it. As the blessing of peace only rested in the homes where the Son of Peace was found, so the benediction of responsibility only abides where the fit spirit awakes to meet it. And what spirit should this be? The answer is, that we must have the spirit of courage, the spirit of trust, the spirit of love. Mr. Ruskin has said that that land is base where the children are always trying to be men, and the men are always trying to keep them children, and that land is noble in which the children are ready to remain children, and the men are helping them to become men. If the land is base in which the children desire to become men, and the men seek to keep them ever as children, is not that land, that Church, that community base in which the men fail in the reverence with which they should accept and in the courage with which they should meet responsibilities as they drop from the hand of Providence into theirs? What else should

be our readiness? Faith. The bride who went forth, went forth with that leal courage which became her decision, went forth also with the faith that there was work for her to do. Her trust was to be seen in absolute forgetfulness of the father's house—"Forget thy father's house:" put it aside; your trust now must be, as your work must be, in the work of the home to which you are called. There must be faith—ah! who can measure it? "The past to be forgotten!" we say. This is just our difficulty. Does it mean that we are so to set aside what has gone as to gather from it no lessons, and receive from it no impulse, and to carry forward from it no authority? Oh, not so. There is a way in which the past must be remembered, because you are men of the past. In your blood there flows the blood of preceding generations. You cannot falsify your heritage. With Churches and communities it is the same. You are born with a certain function and a certain destiny. In the Church it is the same. All the great heritage of the past, the noble traditions, the splendid freedom, and the venerable antiquity, the wondrous catholicity, and the strong loyalty to her Master's words which has belonged to that Church in all ages, is part of our heritage, and we cannot refuse it. Accept it and live by the spirit of it. Translate its spirit into the action of to-day. The third spirit that we want for bearing this responsibility is love. "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house." Another's name is signed upon you, and to the work of that other your life must be consecrated. What is wanted here for us—for all, by whatever name they may be called, in Church or State—first and most, and last and best of all, is that the spirit with which we undertake the responsibilities which fall upon us shall be the spirit of those whose lives are merged in His, so that it is no longer "I, but Christ that liveth in me." (*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*) *The perpetuity of the Church:*—One generation shall come and go after another, but still, like an evergreen tree, which in spite of the constant decay of some of its leaves always preserves its verdant hue, so the Church shall exist till the latest ages, ever growing older, and yet never losing its youth; its members constantly dying, itself perpetually alive. Or, to vary the figure, as when upon the battlefield the brave soldier falls, another stands forward to fill his place, and the line closes in and rushes on anew to conflict; so the battle of the Church with the world ever goes on, "bequeathed from bleeding sire to son," and it shall never cease, until the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Men may slay its members, but they cannot kill the Church; death may take them individually away, but he cannot destroy it, for it is like the Lord who found it, immortal and indestructible. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The responsibility of the young:*—It is in the power of the young of the land thus either to put back the shadow on the dial of the nation and of the Church by more than ten degrees, or to advance it in a like proportion. If they rise to their true and holy labour, if they meet worthily the claims of the age upon them, they will most assuredly do the latter; but if they lose sight of the solemn trust which is committed to their keeping, and waste their energies on trifles, they will as surely do the former. Men laughed at old Trebonius doing honour to his scholars when he entered school; but when at length Martin Luther rose up from among them to emancipate Europe from the bondage of the Papacy, the laugh was all upon his side; and it were well if the young men of our own day would do practical homage to their own future career, by preparing themselves for the honour which may be theirs if they will only worthily discharge the duties to which they are called. I am anxious that they should realize that they have the character of the Church and of the State to keep; and that each man of them should act as if the whole thing depended upon him. I desire that they should feel that they are to receive as a legacy the reputation and the labour of their fathers; and that they should educate themselves so that both shall be safe in their hands. Yea, I would charge it upon them as their guilt and crime, if in any degree the wheels of progress shall be retarded, or the labour of their fathers undone, in their day. If Britain's glory wane, if the Church's triumphs cease, young men of these days, the greater share of the blame must be yours. This responsibility is fixed upon you, and you cannot shake it off. (*Ibid.*) *Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*—*How children become princes:*—I. THE PERPETUATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children." It is in a succession of godly families we see the channel along which the water of life flows in unfailling fulness and beauty. The children of parents who love the truth and honour God are likely to take and keep the features which distinguish the character of the parents.

Godliness is not nearly so difficult to those who come into the world with blood and brain favourable to righteousness as it is to those who come into the world with blood and brain favourable to unrighteousness. But in addition to all that is gained by birth there is the influence of precept and example. II. THE DIGNITY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. "Whom thou mayest make princes." The grandest man is he who has most of the spirit of Christ. When we bring together those who most faithfully reflect His character we have all that is choicest in the race. Nor is it in resemblance to Christ only that princely dignity is manifested. The graces and virtues of religion are often as stepping-stones to high positions in the Church and the world. How many there are, tradesmen, manufacturers, merchants, officers of government, who began life in hardship and poverty, and confess that it is the grace of God which has made them what they are. "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, that He may set him with princes." III. THE DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. "Whom thou mayest make princes." We have an almost literal fulfilment of these words in the history of our foreign possessions. The men who have laid the foundation of great Anglo-Saxon nationalities in different parts of the world have many of them been good men. When we think of the Pilgrim Fathers who sought in America the freedom to worship God which was denied in England; of the religious forces which have done so much to shape and enrich the grandly developing life of Canada and Australia; of the godly soldiers and civilians who have laboured for the enlightenment of India, we recognize the providence of God in sending to those wide tracts of earth "men with empires in their brains," and who by their heroism, industry, and religion have caused the wilderness to become like the garden of the Lord. How pleasing also it is to think of those who have preached, and of those who are preaching, Christ in heathen lands, "Princes in all the earth." Has not Coke still a princely power in Antigua and all its neighbouring isles; and John Hunt in Fiji; Carey in India and Moffatt in Africa? (*Jabez Marrat.*) *Christ's princes:*—What sort of princes are those of Christ's making? I. THEY ARE PRINCES BORN. "Born of water and of the Spirit." There are two things, you see. Both are included in what is called "born again," or "born from above." John's baptism and Christ's baptism bring the two together in figure. Don't separate the two parts; get rid of your sins, and begin new heavenly lives, and you are born again. Breathe the air, then, as princely creatures; Christ makes you "princes in the earth." II. THEY ARE PRINCES BY GETTING A ROYAL EDUCATION. It is a good thing in education to get a good school-book to learn from. It is better still to get a good teacher to teach from the good text-book. Now, Christ provides both things in the princely education which He gives to His own. This Book of God is in all Christ's schools, and there are none of Christ's princes made to do princely work here without it. The Holy Spirit is the teacher, and He is the most excellent teacher. What is the first quality in a teacher—I mean moral quality? Now, teachers are qualified for their work as they have a mother's patience, a mother's gentleness, a mother's love. There is no teacher so gentle as the Holy Spirit, none so patient, so full of love, as He. III. THEY ARE PRINCES BY TRAINING IN ROYAL WORK. The proper end for which princes are being educated is to rule, to take care of others, and manage them; to order and guide subjects for their good. But the first subject that any Christian prince gets to rule is his own spirit. A person who cannot rule his spirit is compared to a city the walls of which are broken down, so that the wild beasts can run in at the breaches where they like. We are to rule ourselves by letting Christ rule us. Being His subjects, we are also His princes. Apart from the general idea of ruling, there are three kinds of work that princes made by Christ get to do. The first is prayer, the second is patience, the third is peace-making. IV. THEY HAVE A CROWN IN PROSPECT. All princes don't come actually to be crowned with earthly crowns; but this is one of the fine things about Christ's princes, they will all be crowned, and all wear their crowns in heaven. Some crowns are made of leaves, fading leaves, but this crown never withers. Some crowns are made of gold, and glitter and shine for a time, yet must perish at last; but this will shine for ever. (*John Edmund, D.D.*) *The unbroken line of true nobles:*—Our text begins with "Instead." It is a sad word; it means we must lose some if others are to come in their stead. Would it not be pleasanter to keep the old workers? What a grand Old Guard the veterans would make. But no, they must go, and others must come instead. We are apt to think them very slow in coming, and too frequent is the fear that they who come will be but very poor substitutes for those who are gone. As

Rehoboam for Solomon, etc. But the word "instead" has a note of gladness in it also. It means, that if we fall there is another to fill up the gap. And sometimes the change is for the better. As Samuel instead of Eli. Courage, our sons may be superior to ourselves. There is room for it, and let us hope they will be. Note in the text—I. ITS ORACIOUS RECOMPENSE. Compare the psalm from which it is taken. The bride was commanded to forget her own people and her father's house. But her loss shall be made up to her. And the law of our text holds good in reference to the separations caused by death in the midst of the Church. If good men are taken, the like will be given, perhaps better. II. ITS EMINENT FILMENT. All along, there have been changes, but in God's garden, as in ours, plants of this year have been succeeded by those of the next. III. ITS HAPPY ENCOURAGEMENT. It says, "shall be." Lean on the Divine "shall." Do not give way to distrust about the future, for Jesus lives and walks among the golden candlesticks, trimming all the lamps, and shining through them. We are not taking a leap into the dark; we are not "shooting Niagara"; we are marching into light. IV. ITS PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS. 1. If we stand instead of our fathers, what manner of persons ought we to be? See what noble men have been before us. Look back to your spiritual ancestry, your fathers after the spirit, your predecessors in the faith of the Lord Jesus. But shall we be craven sons of heroic sires? 2. If others are to come instead of us what are we doing for them? The Church ought to look to the tuition, the training and the culture of her children. It is said that Alexander gathered together his valiant army principally through training children from their very birth to the pursuits of war. These born soldiers grew up knowing of nothing, and caring for nothing but for Alexander, Macedon, and battle. Thus would we, by God's grace, train our sons to live alone for Christ, His truth, and the souls whom He hath redeemed. Now, looking to my young friends, I would ask of them, Are you prepared to take your father's place? Let none of you suppose that because you come of pious parents you will be saved. I stand amongst you like an officer in the midst of his troop, and as one and another falls, I bid you close up your ranks. May the text be true for us. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 17. **I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise Thee.**—*Christ's unending praise:*—Man knows himself to be a flower, which cometh forth and is cut down; yet he wishes the fragrance of his memory, like a costly perfume, to be perpetuated when he himself shall be crumbled into dust. The celebrated painter of antiquity exclaimed, "I paint for eternity." Human ambition always desires to do so. The father hopes to be remembered in his child, the author in his works, the hero in his triumphs, the statesman in his institutions, the legislator in his laws, the patriot in the benefits he has conferred upon his country. We should all love to have the prophecy of the text transferred to ourselves: "I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations." But what is the exceeding brief and transitory remembrance which man seeks from man on earth compared with the unfading honours which Christ attains as the Author and Finisher of faith, or compared with the permanence of those regards which Christ secures to Himself in the hearts of His redeemed people? I. **THE IMPORT OF THE SAVIOUR'S NAME.** "His name." In the Old Testament the name of God is employed as a comprehensive formula to express the manifested glory of His entire character and perfections; and the New Testament attributes the same importance and dignity to the name of Christ which the current style of the Old Testament does to the name of Jehovah. We are said to be baptized in His name, to believe in His name; in His name the remission of sins is to be preached among all nations. And He is said to have a name written which no man knew but Himself. The name of Christ comprehends, therefore, all He is, and all He is to us. And in reference to His mediatorial character and triumphs, He is said to have a name which is above every name. The names of majesty and greatness enumerated by Isaiah—the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counsellor, Prince of Peace—were names which our Lord possessed by right of nature as an equal sharer with the Eternal Father in the glories of Godhead; but His name Jesus He acquired by purchase, by conquest, by death. It cost Him life. As, therefore, Jacob preferred his name Israel before his former name of Jacob, because he acquired it as a memorial of victory, so our Lord may be considered as valuing the name of Jesus, the Saviour, from the suffering it commemorates, the triumph it records, and the love it implies. Certain it is, that



by this designation He emphatically makes Himself known from the highest heaven. Thus He addressed Himself to Saul the persecutor on his way to Damascus, and to John in the Apocalypse. II. SOME OF THOSE GROUNDS ON WHICH WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO ANTICIPATE THE PERMANENT AND ENDURING INFLUENCE OF THE NAME AND RELIGION OF CHRIST. 1. From the fact that the dominion of Christ possesses all the elements of perpetuity, being founded on essential truth, and rectitude, and goodness. This is strongly intimated in the connection of the text: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Why? "The sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness," etc. The Jewish writers have a proverb that "falsehood has no feet," and it is certain that in the great cycle of human affairs nothing is durable but truth. In the character and grace of Christ you have the pledge of the permanence of His religion and the perpetuity of His name. For power, He has all power in heaven and on earth. For wisdom in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. For love, His love passeth knowledge. For truth and faithfulness, heaven and earth shall pass away; but not one jot nor tittle of His Word shall fail. He awes monarchs on their thrones, and yet welcomes childhood to His embrace, and says, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." 2. From the fact that no substitute can be found in the entire universe for the Saviour's grace and salvation. 3. From the history and progress of this religion in ages past, which, though it has always been opposed, has always surmounted opposition, and nerved its friends with energy to uphold its interests. The past is in this respect the pledge of the future. The same principles which rendered Christianity triumphant at first can, and will, make it triumphant to the end; since we can scarcely conceive of tests more severe than those to which it has been subjected, of enemies more powerful than those it has overcome, or of conflicts more appalling than those which it has already surmounted. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Christ's renown everlasting*:—By the "name" of the Son we may understand everything whereby He is made known; especially, however, those amiable and gracious designations which are given to Him in the Bible. This name is "remembered" when it is known, believed in, and kept in mind as important and interesting. Now, according to the promise, it shall be thus respected, not merely for a short time, but in every age, "to all generations." Men shall be raised up, and that means shall be employed to perpetuate his fame; and that, in spite of every attempt to bury Christ's honour, God, by His Almighty power, will actually and eternally make His praise glorious. I. THE NAME OF GOD'S SON. 1. Immanuel—"God with us." But He is not only God, but God "with us." From eternity the Son of God appeared on our side. When the fullness of the time had come, He was manifested in our nature. 2. Jesus—"He shall save His people from their sins." II. THE IMPORT OF CHRIST'S NAME BEING REMEMBERED TO ALL GENERATIONS. This implies—1. That in all ages men shall know His name. "The Son of God hath come, and hath given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true." What is the consequence? They discern Christ to be singularly excellent in His person, and every way suitable in His offices. "We believe, and are sure," is their language, "that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." 2. That in all ages men shall trust in His name. Is His gracious character revealed in the Gospel? He that remembers it perceives in Him ability and willingness to help. Hence, in the exercise itself of remembering, he appropriates the son of God to himself. Viewing Him as Immanuel, he exclaims, "My Lord and my God." Regarding Him as Jesus, he cries, "The Lord is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." 3. That in all ages men shall meditate on Christ's name. III. THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD MAKES CHRIST'S NAME TO BE REMEMBERED. 1. God preserves the Scriptures in which the name of Christ is recorded. 2. God raises up ministers by whom the name of Christ is published. 3. He continues the sacraments by which the name of Jesus is exhibited. In each of these Christ crucified is evidently set before us. 4. He sends the Spirit by which the name of Christ is impressed upon human hearts. All other means may, and often do, prove ineffectual in securing the remembrance of Christ's name. But here is a means which is, and must always be, successful. IV. THE CERTAINTY OF THIS MATTER. 1. The condition of men renders such remembrance of the name of Christ desirable. "There is none other name," etc. 2. The perfections of God make the continued remembrance of Christ's name possible. What are all difficulties, all opposition before Him? 3. The experience of past ages renders it probable that Christ shall still be remembered. 4. The covenant of promise makes it certain that Christ's name

shall be remembered. (*E. Brown.*) *The spiritual seed of Christ praising their heavenly Father*.—I. CHRIST'S NAME. 1. We find Him called "the mighty God" (*Isa. ix. 6*). 2. His name is "Immanuel," that is, "God with us" (*Matt. i. 23*). God in our nature, God on our side. 3. We find Him called "the Messiah." 4. Another name whereby He is called is "Jesus," a Saviour. 5. Another name whereby our glorious surety is designed is, "the Lord our righteousness" (*Jer. xxiii. 6*). II. SOME THINGS IMPORTED IN THE PROMISE. 1. That it is no easy matter to keep up the remembrance of Christ's name in a sinful world. To do it is a work that God hath taken into His own hand in an eminent manner. 2. That Christ's name is very dear and precious to God the Father. 3. The maintenance and preservation of all the means of Divine appointment for keeping up the remembrance of Christ's name. (1) That God will have a professing and confessing Church, in one place or other of the world, in all generations. (2) That the Scriptures shall be preserved in all generations. (3) That the glorious Gospel shall be preached in all generations. (4) That the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be administered in all generations. III. AS CHRIST'S NAME SHALL BE REMEMBERED IN ALL GENERATIONS, SO THERE SHALL BE A PEOPLE PRAISING HIM FOR EVER AND EVER. 1. Mention a few things which we take to be supposed in a person or people their praising Christ. (1) We think this exercise of praising Christ supposes saving acquaintance with Him. Those only are in case to praise Christ to whom He hath manifested forth His glory and given the spiritual eye to behold it. (2) The promise that Christ shall be praised in all generations supposes that there shall be some inspired with true love to Him in every generation. (3) The exercise of giving praise and thanks to Christ supposes a humble and thankful frame of spirit. 2. That there shall be a people praising Christ for ever and ever. This truth will appear—(1) When it is considered that Jehovah the Father hath engaged Himself, by promise to Christ, that He shall still be praised (*Isa. liii. 11*; *Ps. xxii. 30, 31*). (2) When we consider that the great and leading design of Christ in the whole work of redemption and salvation is to bring in a revenue of praise to the crown of heaven. IV. THE GROUNDS AND REASONS FOR WHICH THERE SHALL BE A PEOPLE PRAISING CHRIST FOR EVER AND EVER. 1. On account of His own personal dignity, worth and excellency. 2. On account of what He has done for them (*Rev. v. 9*). 3. For what He is and ever will continue to be unto them. V. USE. 1. Inferences. (1) Hence, see the sinfulness, folly and vanity of every endeavour to blot out the remembrance of Christ's name. (2) We may see what is the duty of all who would evidence themselves to be really the friends of Christ. Do you then ask, after what manner shall we, who are in a private station, contribute our share to the keeping up of the remembrance of Christ's name? You are to contribute to the keeping up the remembrance of Christ's name by making an open and explicit acknowledgment of all His truths before the world when you have a call in providence to do it. You are to make conscience of observing the worship of God in your families. You are to contribute your share to the keeping up of the remembrance of Christ's name in the world by a holy and circumspect walk and conversation. 2. Exhortation. (*T. Bennet.*)

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#### PSALM XLVI.

VERS. 1-11. *God is our refuge and strength.*—A psalm of war and peace:—The psalm is divided into three parts, as the Selahs at the end of the third and seventh verses indicate. The first is shorter by one verse, but, were the refrain added to it—it has been said that it was once there—then the psalm stands with a symmetry almost unique. As it is, it has not many rivals. This treasure-house of sacred emotions is built of polished stones, and they are fitly set. 1. The first part teaches us to test and try our faith. The singer anticipates a wider storm, and in imagination launches forth in troubled seas. He imagines a break-up, the sea prevailing on the shore, mountains shaken with the swelling thereof; yet through all his faith remains, and he calmly trusts in God. By anticipation he

makes preparation for such a crisis, and disciplines his soul to face such an emergency. Our faith is not for an hour or a day: it is to be our mainstay through life and in the hour of death: it is meant to steady and strengthen us in every calamity, however sad, and in every crisis, however sudden. Let us do with it as men do with the anchor chain—try it in fair weather, subject it to a strain greater even than it will likely be called on to bear. Many a faith, once strong, is allowed to rust into weakness, just through sheer neglect. 2. The second part teaches us wisely to remember and profit by the past. Jerusalem had been besieged by the mighty Sennacherib, and delivered miraculously; and the remembrance of the experience strengthened their faith. That night, when the foe surged around her and beleaguered her gates, was a night of omen and portent; but the watchers, in the stillness of the night, still heard the sound of Siloa's brook as it rippled and tinkled through the silence; and they knew that God was with them. We, whose national life is seldom perilled either when the heathen rage or kingdoms are moved, must never forget that there are mercies as great surrounding us as if our path was more troubled. When the summer sun shines and the moon walks forth, we have in them as great tokens of His goodness as was displayed in the deliverance of Jerusalem. Pity the man whose life has gone well with him and who cannot say, The Lord is good: He has been with me. 3. We learn from the third part rightly to act with regard to the present. The time of war is over, its fierce flame has spent itself in desolation. We walk over the battlefield, and feel the silence which has fallen. Then the Divine command comes: "Be still, and know that I am God." All the peace there is on earth has risen out of the storm of war. Its hills were shaped into beauty amid the storms of nature: the grass grows from the detritus and wreck of storms: our liberties have all been purchased in war: Jesus Christ Himself comes from Bozra with dyed garments. 4. Such was the song of war the Hebrew singer sang; now it is the song of the gospel of peace and of victory; for "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war." By the heading, "A Song upon Alamothe," you will see this was a song for the dance, a song for the women to sing. It could be given to those with the gentlest hearts and silentest lives, as well as to those who had brave deeds to do. It was eminently Luther's psalm, on which he founded his own hymn, and is plainly fitted to be a song of the Church. (*J. A. Black, M.A.*) *The moral mirror of the good:*—I. THE EARTHLY SCENE OF THE GOOD IS THAT OF TUMULT AND OPPOSITION. 1. To remind us of the constant presence of moral evil. 2. To heighten our aspirations for a peaceful future. II. THE PRESENT RESOURCES OF THE GOOD ARE ADEQUATE TO EVERY EMERGENCY. 1. Their resources are in God. 2. Their resources, being in God, are ample. (1) They are ever present. He is ever present: "God is in the midst of her"; we have no distance to go. (2) They are ever certain. "God shall help her, and that right early," or at the breaking of the morning. Deliverance is often delayed till the last moment, but it will come. Abraham in offering Isaac; Israel at the Red Sea, etc. III. THE SPIRIT OF THE GOOD MAY, EVEN NOW, BE CALM AND TRIUMPHANT. "We will not fear." We will "be still, and know that He is God"; and more, we will sing in the fiercest tumult, "The Lord of Hosts is with us," etc. (*Homilist.*) *God our refuge:*—There is an allusion to the cities of refuge. I. WHAT GOD IS TO THE CHRISTIAN. 1. A refuge, which greatly excels those cities of Israel which were appointed for refuge to the man-slayer. It is in Jesus: is very near to the guilty; believing brings him into it at once: it is not temporary, but eternal: those refuges were only for the innocent, but this for the sinful: those were only for protection, not for liberty; only the death of the high priest made the refugees free, but this, how different: those were of no avail to the feeble and weak, they were not helped in any way to escape. 2. Strength: through His Spirit promises means of grace. 3. A very present help in trouble: such as the day of contrition, of temptation, of trial, of death. II. THE CONFIDENCE THE BELIEVER HAS IN GOD. 1. He says he "will not fear." Inside the city of refuge the refugee was safe: so the soul in Christ (Rom. viii. 1). 2. God, being his help and strength, the want and loss of everything is supplied. 3. This absence of fear is not temerity. They have abundant reason for saying, "Therefore will not we fear." (*Pulpit Analyst.*) *Man's refuge, strength and help:*—The author of this psalm is unknown, but the occasion, it is almost unanimously agreed, was the deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib. Christians in all ages have drawn encouragement and strength from its promises and triumphant declarations. Luther, in trouble, was accustomed to say to his friend Melanch-

thon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm": when his face would brighten like the sky after a summer shower. Even the profligate Byron, infidel, yet true poet, breaks forth in lofty strains as he tells us how "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold." **I. GOD AS A REFUGE.** God's children often need such refuge. A bird pursued by a hawk took shelter in the bosom of a man, who said to it, "I will not kill thee nor betray thee to thine enemy, seeing thou hast fled to me for sanctuary." Christ came into this world that the soul hunted by the fierce hawks of temptation and sin might have a safe refuge.

**II. GOD AS THE STRENGTH OF THE BELIEVER.** Many would be Christians if they could only be assured that they would be eminent Christians. God never promises that, but only strength and grace. We are entirely dependent on Him for this. It has enabled men to—1. Endure great trials. 2. To conquer. As the old crusaders put upon their bannered cross, "In hoc signo vinces," so many a believer to-day faces and conquers his enemies in the strength that God gives.

**III. GOD IS ALSO A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE.** This world, beautiful as it is, has its dark and gloomy side. No one is exempt from trial. A motherless little girl was asked, "What do you do without a mother to whom to tell your troubles?" She replied, "My mother told me before she died to go to the Lord Jesus. She said that He had always been her friend, and that if I would go to Him He would always be my friend." "But," said the questioner, "He is a great way off, and has so much to do; He cannot attend to you." "I don't know how much He has to do," said the child, "but He has said He would take care of me, and I believe He will." Would that we all had the faith of this orphan child. (*Robert Bruce Hull.*) *The safe shelter.*—There are many who make their wealth their refuge. Others trust in their health and strength. They say, "Look at this strong arm, this robust chest, and this firm body! Talk of death: ah! ah! see my strength!" **I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR GOD OFFERS TO US A SURE REFUGE**, for there is no deception in Him. You have had fathers and mothers whose noble testimony to the character of God has been before you. They trusted in Him; and were their lives a failure? **II. OUR FATHER GOD IS A REFUGE FROM ALL THE ATTACKS OF SATAN.** Our Father will not allow the devil to battle with His children above their tiny strength. **III. OUR FATHER IS A REFUGE FROM THE WICKED DESIRES OF OUR HEARTS.** **IV. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS OUR REFUGE FROM THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE SINFUL WORLD.** Keep as far as ever you can from the paths that lead so many to a ruined life and an agonized death. **V. IN JESUS WE SEE THAT GOD IS OUR SHELTER FROM THE SMITINGS OF A CONVICTED CONSCIENCE.** (*W. Birch.*) **A very present help in trouble.**—*Sure help.*—Since the days of King David the forty-sixth psalm has been a song of comfort for God's people. It was the song of the Christian martyrs of Europe, and of the persecuted Quakers of this country; and when our English dragoons pursued God's people in Scotland as if they were wild beasts! We cannot all bear trouble alike. Some men pass through deep waters without apparently feeling it very much, while others appear old almost before they are young men in years. Trouble comes in different ways. Sometimes through trade or business. When you lose your money, why should you also lose your peace? If your joy rests on your money, I would not give twopence for it. God is never so near as when we are in trouble. If this be so, let us march bravely under our burden, like Christian soldiers. Others may have trouble because they are vexed by a few enemies. If you are successful in any great and good work, men of feeble and envious mind will seek opportunities of showing their spite; but it ought not to vex and annoy you. And others may be in some trouble because of bereavement. (*W. Birch.*) *Our present help.*—Some years ago on fine Saturday afternoons it was my custom to scamper in the fields with some of our fatherless children. Once we went round by Salford to Weaste Lane, returning by the river bank and the adjoining fields. We were very weary and hungry when we reached Throstle Nest, and much disappointed to see no ferry-boat there to carry us across the river. After shouting to the opposite side until we were hoarse, we gave it up in despair, and I said to the children, "What shall we do?" Little Annie, a tiny girl with golden hair, replied, "I don't care, while you are here!" Does our God ever forget to attend to the requests of His people? When He has been very busy with revivals in ten thousand worlds, does He say to His angels, "Ah, angels, I am sorry I forgot to attend to that poor man in his trouble"? No, no! Our God never forgets. He is always a present help in time of trouble. **I. THE LORD IS OUR PRESENT HELP WHEN WE ARE TRIED BY TEMPTATION.** When Joseph was being tempted every day, the wife of his

master may have said, "Nobody shall know"; but God was Joseph's present help in that continual temptation. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The fact of God's presence is the most powerful remedy against every temptation. II. THE LORD IS A PRESENT HELP WHEN WE ARE ENDURING TROUBLE. All God's people are tried. If we were not tried we should not be worth much in the battlefield of faith. Only tried veterans can be relied on in a difficult enterprise. "These are they who came out of great tribulation." If you are tried, be not disheartened; remember that God will be a present help to enable you to bear up in every trouble. It is God's will to try us, because it is the only way to make us meet for the grandeur of heaven. III. OUR GOD IS A PRESENT HELP WHEN WE ARE STRIVING TO ATTAIN A NOBLE LIFE. Notice the student working hard, long after the midnight hour has struck. See, he binds a wet cloth round his head to calm the fever of his brain; and the world says it is all right; yet when they see a man struggling to overcome bad passions and acquire virtue, they have but little sympathy; but God beholds all your weary battles, and encourages you with His presence. IV. OUR GOD IS OUR PRESENT HELP WHEN HE ASSURES US OF SALVATION. You may have heard of a ship which sailed off from a sinking vessel and left the crew and passengers to perish; but our God, in Christ, shall leave no sinner to perish in the ocean of iniquity, without making an effort to rescue him. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You may reply, "Ah, but, sir, Christ would refuse me, because my soul is diseased." Some insurance societies might refuse your body, but Christ will never refuse any man's soul. A man who is in very bad health, and in despair about his life, goes to a physician and tells him all about his case. Having listened to all he has to say, the doctor comes up to him with a cheerful face, saying, "Well, I can guarantee to cure you." Why, the man goes away almost better! Now, Christ says to every soul that is diseased with sin, "I can cure you." And He has cured myriads of such souls. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. **Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed.**—*Deliverance from fear*:—Charles Wesley preached from this text, I think, in City Road, in the year of the London earthquake. People fled terror-stricken from their homes and crowded City Road Chapel, feeling that if disaster were overtaking the world safety might be found in the company of godly people. The great preacher thundered forth, "Therefore will we not fear," etc. It was a great moment, and yet some of you doubtless will remember that the founder of Methodism himself at a certain crisis in his life passed through an antithetic experience to this. John Wesley records in his Journal that when he was crossing the Atlantic a storm came up which threatened to overwhelm the vessel in which he was borne, and he cried out for fear. He felt ashamed of his terrors when he came to think of them afterwards. "I, a Christian man, afraid in the presence of death." What brought his shame home to him was the spectacle of a group of people—Moravians they were—men, women and little children—singing, some of them kneeling, some of them standing, in a tiny circle on the deck of the ship—singing as fearlessly as though they were on their own hearthstone; and he thought to himself, "These possess something that I do not possess." And the time came when John Wesley was as remarkable for his absolute fearlessness in the face of overwhelming odds compared with which most religious workers of the present day have a very easy time indeed. The time came when he could not only say but help other people to say, "Therefore will we not fear," etc.; and he was able to make that Old Testament experience his just because he had come into a closer relationship with Him who says, "It is I; be not afraid." Though the Christian may have much to do with pain, there should be in his experience no place for fear. Take three examples—three orders of experience shall I call them?—and describe them. Take one who has a business worry. Alongside of him suppose one who brings a home sorrow; and we ought not to omit the man who knows himself to be guilty of moral transgression. To begin with, then, there may be here a small tradesman who has been overtaken, like many other people, by bad times. Your assets are good enough, but you cannot realize them, and yet you are being pressed to meet claims, perfectly just, but which, if they are pressed to the full, will ruin you. You are working so hard, yet you never have an hour free from worry. Now, what is really the matter with you? Is it not fear of something? It is not just what you passed through yesterday. If you knew every day was to be no worse than yesterday—hard though it was, and extensive as your efforts

were, and difficult some of the problems undoubtedly are—if you could be sure that things would be no worse, it would not look so very sad. What is the reason? Those who are near and dear to you are part of your problem. If you could only get rid of all fear concerning their future and your own as bound up with theirs, would it not make a difference? Now, not far from such a person there is another whose heart is full of pain, caused not by one thing merely but by fifty. Perhaps within recent days sickness has invaded your home, and misfortunes never come singly. That sickness means more than the suffering of the loved one whom it has attacked. It means disaster in some other form. It means there is less money coming in; it means perhaps that you are called upon to make sacrifices that you can only make up to a certain point. Then in the train of this there comes, perhaps, the loss of friends, the loss of reputation, or you have to suffer from being misjudged. Somebody is saying something about you. You do not like it—none of us cares about false accusations. Now, you cannot but feel, and imagination helps you a little, that these things one on top of another constitute an immense problem and make life more dark for you. Supposing, now, that I could stretch forth my hand and sweep all the fear out of your experience, you have got none left; supposing things were just as bad as they were yesterday, supposing they were worse to-morrow, but no fear—what a difference that would make to the strength with which you would meet the problems of your life—yes, and to the fashion in which you would overcome the adversary that besets you to-day. Now we come to the third. Years ago you contracted a bad habit. You thought very lightly about it then, you fancied you could do wrong with impunity, and you knew that while it was wrong you went on till you found you were growing a devil out of your own substance, and he will not leave you now that you want him to go. He has got his steel talons fixed upon your throat and is tearing the manhood out of you. Your friends are beginning to whisper about you, and your own heart is filled with foreboding, and it will only be a matter of time before you are wrecked—wrecked not by what any man has done to you, but by what you have done to yourself. You have trifled with moral questions in the past. You have been a strong man and could afford to give range to your passions, but now you feel a very weak one indeed, and far weaker than you would care to own. Now, how do you feel about your experience? What is most wrong is that you have very little hope of getting free. If you could only see a way out of the moral entanglement, if you could only be perfectly sure that a battle for righteousness, however late it was taken, would be a successful battle. It would lighten your load, and you would go home feeling a far different man. Now, there are more ways than one of getting rid of this enemy, of which we are all sooner or later conscious—fear. Some people take the wrong way. I want you to take the right way. For some natures the way of escape has been to fling oneself into the arms of a greater enemy. That is the reason why so many unlikely men, for instance, take to the wine-cup. Morbid excitement, or some anæsthetic that will dull thinking are the way in which some people try to get rid of the fear that blights and blackens their life. The philosophy of "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die" has its adherents still, and certain it is that it is a miserable cheeriness, a wretched, cynical sort of happiness which comes by that means. Deliverance from fear under such circumstances is never complete. Observe the hunted looks in the eyes of the man who is trying to forget himself, who leads the laughter in a company, but should not be laughing at all. You know that fear is not gone, it is only waiting outside the door. Very different is the man who cultivates a habit of mind or an order of character which meets hardness with hardness. Sometimes we are almost compelled to admire the dauntlessness of a bad man. He knows he has made the world black. His heart may be very sore, but he does not give way. Sometimes the people upon whom we are hardest in our censures deserve our pity more than our censures. We think them unscrupulous and unrepentant, whereas remorse, which is just next door to repentance, has gripped them. Well, that is one way. I believe it is possible for a man to gradually, as it were, harden his feeling until pain does not make the same inroad upon him as it did at first, and it is possible to expel fear by defying it and keeping on in the old, bad way. But there is a better way than that; that way is a poor sort at the best, and oftentimes it breaks down completely in the stress of life, and you will see a man become as a little babe, weak as water, when fate has tried him beyond a certain point, and his philosophy all goes for nothing. "Therefore will we not fear," he

says, as long as he can, then one day comes the dread spectre before him and overshadows him, and he sinks before it in the darkness of despair. The real way is not to destroy fear, but to expel fear by faith. Watch your own little child, and he can teach you something. The child is troubled with a real trouble. Look upon him with love, and the sunshine breaks over his little soul. He will enjoy life even when it is dark to you; if only you are there. He somehow feels that his father is good for anything. And that trust of his is justified. The more he trusts you the better you like it; the more complete and beautiful the innocent loyalty that he offers to you, and his confidence in your strength, the more willing you are to rise to fulfil his expectation. I wish we could do as our Master taught us to do, and learn that the fatherhood that we see is just that—a corner of the reality. It is the pale glimmer of the light from which it came. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your Heavenly Father—" Now, that is the simple duty, but expanded it means a great deal. Trust what? Well, I say this—trust in the essential rightness of things; trust that, though life seems to be organized so that hardness is part of your lot; trust, too, that there is such a thing as the peace passing understanding which comes to the soul of the man who is willing to place himself upon the altar for righteousness' sake. Believe this also, that when you trust God it is not yours to dictate, but God. God is master of the issues of your life; what have you got to be afraid of? (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *Earthquake but not heartquake*:—All who are truly the chosen of God should exhibit a fearless courage. I. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SAINTS. It is altogether beyond themselves. There is nothing about what is their own, but their confidence is all in God. This confidence is gained by an appropriating faith. "This God is our God." And is greatly sustained by a clear knowledge of God. Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man." It is a deplorably barren subject. Say, rather, "The proper study of mankind is God." "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." All this will be certified to us by our experience. You that know the Lord, can you not say by experience, "God is our refuge"? Look at the little chicks yonder under the hen. See how they bury their little heads in the feathers of her warm bosom! Hear their little chirp of perfect happiness as they nestle beneath the mother's wing! "He shall cover thee with His feathers," etc. We can also say that God has been "our strength," and "a very present help in trouble." We feel something of the mind of Sir Francis Drake who, after he had sailed round the world, was buffeted with a storm in the Thames. "What," said he, "have we sailed round the world safely, and shall we be drowned in a ditch?" So do we say at this day. Helped so long and helped so often! But in order to realize this fearlessness we need an immediate enjoyment of the Divine help. "God is my refuge and strength." II. THE COURAGE WHICH GROWS OUT OF IT. This courage is very full and complete. "Therefore will not we fear." It does not say, "Therefore will not we run away, or even faint, or swoon in dread," but "we will not fear." And this courage is logically justifiable. The believer's fearlessness is founded upon argument. Hence it says, "Therefore we will not fear." For nothing that happens affects God, the ground of his confidence. Now, this fearlessness is exceedingly profitable. Serenity of spirit, such as was ever in Jesus; no temptation to do wrong. And it brings great glory to God. I knew a youth, near forty years ago, who was staying with relations when a thunderstorm of unusual violence came on at nightfall. A stack was struck by lightning and set on fire within sight of the door. The grown-up people in the house, both men and women, were utterly overcome with fright, the men even more than the women; all sat huddled together: there was a little child up-stairs, and, though anxious about it, the mother had not courage enough to pass the staircase windows to bring the child down. But this youth was quietly happy. The babe cried, and he went up and fetched it down and gave it to its mother. He needed no candle, for the lightning was so continuous that he could clearly see his way. He sat down and read a psalm aloud to his trembling relatives, who looked on the lad with loving wonder. That night he was master of the situation, and all felt there was something in the religion which he had lately professed. III. THE CONFLICTS TO WHICH THIS FEARLESSNESS WILL BE EXPOSED. It will be tried in ways novel and unusual. "Though the earth be removed." Sometimes mysterious and threatening: "the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." If we saw that we should be at our wits' end to account for it. Some trials also appear to be utterly ungovernable. "Though the waters

thereof roar," etc. And sometimes the fear of others affects us. "The mountains shake with," etc. **CONCLUSION.** If war should come, as it may; or anarchy and a break-up of social order; or trade fail, or persecution come back; or heresy prevail. Fear not. I remember years ago meeting with that blessed servant of God, the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was at Mentone with a dying daughter, and he happened that day to be very downcast, as, indeed, I have frequently seen him, and as, I am sorry to confess, he has also frequently seen me. That day he was particularly cast down about the general state of society. He thought that the powers of darkness in this country were having it all their own way, and that, before long, the worst elements of society would gain power and trample out all virtue. Looking up into his face, I said to him, "And is God dead? Do you believe that while God lives the devil will conquer Him?" He smiled, and we walked along by the sea, communing together in a far more hopeful tone. In the Book of Revelation tremendous events are foretold, and they will come, but we need not fear. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Fearless fronting of the future:*—**I. THERE MAY BE GREAT TEMPESTS IN THE FUTURE.** The annals of the past are filled with records of social earthquakes and raging tempests. "The mountains," the largest things in human life, thrones, governments, fortunes, have been carried into the midst of revolutionary seas, which have roared and heaved, and with their dashing floods made things stable as the "mountains shake." What has been may come again. Into whatever domain we step there is commotion: in the realms of politics party is contending with party and kingdom with kingdom; in the realms of commerce what fierce competitions—every little spirit is striving for the mastery; in the realms of literature opinions battle with opinions and systems with systems; in the realms of religion, in the very heart of the holy city, "the waters roar with the swelling" of acrimonious controversies and sectarian feuds. Of all revolutions, none is greater to the individual man than death, involving the utter disorganizing of the body, the disruption of all material ties, and the launching of the soul into the awful mysteries of retribution. And then, in the future not only of ourselves but of all departed and coming men, there are revolutions more terrible than any that has yet happened. **II. THERE NEED BE NO DREAD FOR OUR FUTURE.** "God is our refuge," etc. 1. His protective sufficiency. Infinite in its amplitude, impregnable in its resistance, interminable in its duration. We can be involved in no difficulty from which He cannot extricate, exposed to no danger from which He cannot shelter, assailed by no enemies from which He cannot deliver. 2. His perennial grace. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," etc. What is the true "city of God"? Not architecture, not an assemblage of buildings, not a place of habitation; but the community of godly spirits. This is the city of Elohim. A city pure, harmonious, ever-growing. As the stream that issued from Eden to water the whole garden, so the gracious influences of Heaven, like a river, roll through all the parts of this blessed community. This river of grace has never failed, and never will, hence let us trust in Him. 3. His providential interposition. "What desolations He hath made on the earth." Mark them well. Not the desolation of virtue, order, or peace, or aught that ennobles or beautifies human nature. But desolations amongst the desolators of human rights, of human happiness and progress. He destroys the works of the devil. With confidence in such a God as this, we need not fear. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 4-7. **There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.**—*The city and river of God:*—There are two remarkable events in the history of Israel, one or the other of which most probably supplied the historical basis upon which this psalm rests. One is that singular deliverance of the armies of Jehoshaphat from the attacking forces of the bordering nations, but I think rather that the more ordinary reference is the correct one, which sees in this psalm and in the two succeeding, the echoes of that supernatural deliverance of Israel in the time of Hezekiah, when "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold," and Sennacherib and all his army were, by the blast from the breath of His nostrils, swept into swift destruction. Now, these verses are the cardinal central portion of the song. We may call them The Hymn of the defence and the deliverance of the city of God. The main turning points in them are—I. **THE GLADDENING RIVER**—an emblem of many great and joyous truths. This river is God Himself in the outflow and self-communication of His own grace to the soul. The stream is the fountain



in flow. Concerning this communication note—1. The manner of it. In the previous verses you can hear the wild waves of the sea dashing round the base of the firm hills, sapping their strength, and toppling their crests down in the bubbling, yeasty foam. Remember how, not only in Scripture but in all poetry, the sea has been the emblem of endless unrest. Its waters, those barren, wandering fields of foam, going moaning round the world with unprofitable labour, how they have been the emblem of unbridled power; of tumult and strife, and anarchy and rebellion! Then mark how our text brings into sharpest contrast with all that hurly-burly of the tempest, and the dash and roar of the troubled waters, the gentle, quiet flow of the river, “the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” the translucent little ripples purling along beds of golden pebbles, and the onamelled meadows drinking the pure stream as it steals by them. Thus, says our psalm, not with noise, not with tumult, not with conspicuous and destructive energy, but in silent, secret, underground communications—God’s grace, God’s love, His peace, His power, His Almighty and gentle Self flow into men’s souls. The extremest power is silent. 2. Their number and variety. “The streams whereof,” that is to say, “the divisions whereof.” As Eastern rivers are broken up into canals that are led off to each man’s plot of ground. Listen to words that are a commentary upon this verse, “All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will.” 3. The effects of this communicated God. “The streams make glad.” They to whom this stream pours shall know no thirst; they who possess it from them it shall come. Out of him “shall flow rivers of living water.” “The least flower with a brimming cup may stand, And share its dewdrop with another near.” The city thus supplied may laugh at besieging hosts. With the deep reservoir in its central fortress, the foe may do as they list to all surface streams; its water shall be sure, and no raging thirst shall ever drive it to surrender. II. Then notice secondly, substantially the same general thought, but modified and put in plain words—**THE INDWELLING HELPER**. “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: “God shall help her, and that right early.” Or, as the latter clause had better be translated, as it is given in the margin of some of our Bibles, “God shall help her at the appearance of the morning.” There are two things then. First of all, the constant presence; and second, help at the right time. “The Lord is in the midst of her”—that is the perennial fact. “The Lord shall help her, and that right early”—that is the “grace for seasonable help.” III. The psalm having set forth these broad grounds of confidence, goes on to tell **THE STORY OF THE ACTUAL DELIVERANCE WHICH CONFIRMS THEM**. That deliverance comes from the Conquering Voice. “He uttered His voice—the earth melted.” With what vigour these hurried sentences describe, first the wild wrath and formidable movements of the foe, and then the one sovereign word which quells them all, as well as the instantaneous weakness that dissolves the seeming solid substance when the breath of His lips smites it! How grand and lofty the thought! the simple word conquers all opposition. He speaks and it is done. “The depths are congealed in the breast of the sea!” As if you were to lay hold upon Niagara in its wildest plunge, and then with a word to freeze all its descending waters, and stiffen them into immovableness in fetters of eternal ice. So, He utters His voice, and all meaner noises are hushed. “His voice the earth melted.” How grandly, too, these last words give the impression of immediate and utter dissolution of all opposition! All the Titanic brute forces are, at His voice, disintegrated, and lose their organization and solidity. “The hills melted like wax;” “The mountains flowed down at Thy presence.” The psalmist is generalizing the historical fact of the sudden and utter destruction of Sennacherib’s host into a universal law. And it is a universal law—true for us as for Hezekiah and the sons of Korah, true for all generations. IV. **THE ACT BY WHICH WE ENTER THE CITY OF GOD**. “The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” There must be personal appropriation. We must make these truths our own, grasping them by faith, and unite ourselves with the great multitude who are joined together in Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The security and happiness of the Church*:—I. **WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY THE CITY OF GOD**. Two descriptive pictures are laid before us. One is a scene of wild commotion. The earth is removed from its place; the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea. The other scene stands out in marked contrast to this. A placid river runs through a sheltered valley; utterly unaffected by the elemental disturbances which surround it, and sending to every part of the city, through which it flows, its calm fertilizing streams of health and peace. The scene of

tempest and commotion is the world. The scene of silent usefulness, and sheltered repose, and enjoyed and diffused blessing—the city watered by a river—is the Church of God. And how true is the picture as seen in the respective destinies of secular communities and the one spiritual community of God's Church! The spiritual Zion has always been able to hold her own. It has been God's stronghold, having "salvation for its walls and bulwarks," and girt round on every side by the everlasting hills. II. **THE SPIRITUAL HAPPINESS OF THE TRUE CHURCH OF GOD.** 1. It is implied that, in this city of God, there is much of inward tranquillity and peacefulness. A contrast is presented between the calm which reigns in the city, and the tempest which is raging outside. It is the calm of the Divine presence. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved"—neither by weapons turned against her, nor dangers threatening her, nor calamities and fears casting her down. But let us not lose ourselves in generalities. The tranquillity of the Church is the tranquillity of every individual member of that Church. It is the calm repose of sonship—the sense of deliverance from a bondage state; the pleasant consciousness of pardon and acceptance—all the tumult of inward guilt subsiding into a great calm. Again, it is the tranquillity of men under absolute control and guidance in relation to everything that concerns them. They are not their own, being bought with a price. But they are bought only to be under a happier service—"being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." Yet is this law not their yoke, but their relief. They are relieved from the embarrassment and tyranny of their own erring and mistaken choices. 2. Observe, as another feature of the spiritual happiness of the Church, the rich provision made for all her members, a provision both of grace and glory. A river is an emblem of copiousness and depth and vitality and continuance. But not by the parent river only is the city of God gladdened. It receives blessing through a multitude of tributary streams. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Thus there is the stream of revealed truth and knowledge; the pure deep living waters of inspiration; that word of the Gospel which, beginning with Moses and the prophets, and widening as time flowed on, at length emptied all its treasures of grace and truth into that crystal sea of light, which contains the full and perfect revelation of the mind of God. And then there is the stream of holy ordinances—the Sabbath with its tranquil devotions. 3. "Make glad," observe it is said; the expression intimating that among the inhabitants of this city of God there is true gladness and rejoicing. It is true gladness, the gladness of rational and responsible beings, the calm gladness of a relieved conscience, of an interest made sure in the great propitiation, of a conscious abiding under that light of God's countenance which makes over to us Heaven's best, and earth's best too—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The city of God*.—I. **THE CITY.** 1. God is its founder. 2. God is its lawgiver. 3. It is a defended city (*Zech. ii. 5*). 4. It is an exalted city. The character of the King raises her in the scale of importance. The Lord Jehovah has His palace within her; there He, at times, manifests the glories of His character and the splendour of His majesty. This city is also exalted by the numerous and valuable privileges she enjoys; every subject has free access to a throne of grace, there to present his suit, to make known his grievance, and to supplicate every needful favour. There is also perfect freedom in this city; no galling shackles, no dreaded fetters, are employed to enslave, but every subject of Christ enjoys the sweetest liberty in walking according to the given law of heaven. Here it is freedom to obey and liberty to serve. II. **THE SUPPLY OF THIS CITY.** 1. The good providence of God is a stream which continually follows the Church. A thorough conviction of the superintendence of an all-wise Providence is productive of the greatest joy and satisfaction to the Christian. He rests satisfied, depending on the word of truth that "all things shall work together for good." 2. The Holy Scriptures are a stream from the Deity, inasmuch as they are emphatically the revelation of God, and they contain matter of joy to the Christian in many respects. In this volume he finds information for the mind, the strongest motives to Christian obedience, a sacred impulse to his zeal, an increasing ardour to his affections, and new encouragement for hope. 3. The influences of the Spirit. He who hath begun a good work will carry it on. 4. Its joy "shall make glad the city of God." The gladness of the Church comes from God, a pure spring, so that it must be pure in its nature. Indeed, He alone is the source of all the believer's comforts, however numerous and various they may be. (*D. Jones.*) *The security and happiness of the Church*.—Note the contrasted

scenes. One, of wild commotion—the sea is roaring and troubled: the other of quiet peace. A placid river runs through its sheltered valley, undisturbed and undisturbable. The scene of tempest and change is the world: of quiet peace, the Church. I. **THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH.** Trace its history from first to last and see how it has been preserved. II. **ITS TRANQUILLITY.** For therein are to be found men who are—1. At peace with God. 2. Under the holy government of their Lord, which restrains all passion and temper. 3. In communion with God. 4. In the use of religious ordinances. III. **THE SUPPLY OF THE CHURCH.** "A river." Think of the source, the continuance, the fulness, of this stream of heavenly truth, bright and pure. IV. **THE GLADNESS OF THE CHURCH.** 1. It is noble and worthy of rational beings. 2. It is satisfying. 3. It is sanctifying. 4. It is benevolent. 5. It fits us for scenes where gladness is eternal. (*R. Watson.*)

*The river of God:*—The fourth chapter of St. John and Psalm sixty-three show that by the river spoken of, the Holy Spirit of God is meant. Under the figure of a river the properties and excellencies of the Spirit of God, here described as flowing through the Scriptures and the Church, are set forth. I. **A RIVER FLOWS FROM A FOUNTAIN,** and this river "proceeded out of the throne of God and the Lamb," the infinite bosom of our Father and our God. II. **IT IS EXHAUSTLESS** as the fountain from whence it flows. III. **IT IS IN PLACES SHALLOW,** whilst in others its depths cannot be fathomed. IV. **IT IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.** V. **FERTILITY FOLLOWS IT.** VI. **ITS CHANNEL IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** VII. **IT IS A HIGHWAY** by which great treasures are conveyed to us; and it is a great means of communication between us and heaven. VIII. **IT RISES TO THE HEIGHT OF ITS SOURCE.** IX. **IT BEARS ALL DOWN BEFORE IT** by its force and pressure. X. **IT IS A DEFENCE** to the city which it surrounds. XI. **IT BEARS OFF ALL IMPURITIES.** XII. **IT IS A GLADDENING SPECTACLE.** Then let us value the work of the Holy Spirit. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*)

*The river of mercy:*—I. **THE RIVER.** This I take to be the mercy of God; His kindness to the miserable. Just, He must needs be, for He would not be merciful if He were not just. But there are manifestations of His justice in which He takes no joy. "He taketh no pleasure in the death of the sinner;" but "He delighteth in mercy." And sometimes its exhibitions are very tender—"it droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath." And how copious its store! it is a river, not a rill that can be turned aside by any pebble in its bed; but a river that sweeps triumphantly over and through every obstacle. II. **THE STREAMS.** Some rivers are fed by streams; not so this one: it gives out streams but receives none, like the river of Damascus, whose branches surround the city. These streams are—1. **Pardoning mercy.** 2. **Purifying mercy:** for it would be of little use if purity were not given as well as pardon. 3. **Pacifying mercy—to keep me quiet in the midst of this unquiet world.** III. **THE FRUIT.** The river is to make glad the city of God. That is, God's Church and people; and the great purpose of the river and all its streams is—to make them glad: to bring up a smiling landscape around them, to fill their lips and hearts with praise. IV. **ITS SOURCE.** It is far above out of your sight. So is it, even, with earthly rivers: they do not at once reveal their source. You must travel up and up the stream, and leave plain for hillside, and still press on ere you come to the fountain head. And for this river you must ascend to the boundless lake of Divine love. V. **THE CHANNEL**—the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him it flows down to man. VI. **THE POWER** that brings the streams close home to us, so that we may have the blessing, is the power of the Holy Spirit. See what He has already done in the Scriptures and in the Church. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*)

*The river through the city:*—I. An illustration of the **GLADNESS GIVEN BY GOD TO HIS CHURCH.** The mercies of God, to the Jews, were like a river constantly flowing, making glad the city. The figure is suggestive. A river is a great boon to any city through which it passes so long as it keeps within its accustomed channels. It gives brightness to a city. It lends interest, makes picturesque by its bends or its tree- and reed-fringed banks. It is a means of intercourse with other places. Imagine Paris without the many-bridged Seine, or London without its ship-burdened Thames. A river may be a constant bearer of material blessings. By its ebb and flow it blesses a city in various ways. It bears away refuse, and brings back vitalizing influences. A river can make glad in that it bears the necessities of life to a beleaguered city, which but for the roadway of water could not be reached. At the relief of Londonderry, what joy when the ships pressed past the intercepting booms and came right up to the wharves, and rolled to a famishing people and cattle the barrels of flour and bundles of fodder. Jerusalem

had no such rivers as those we have been speaking of. It had a torrent sweeping by in Kedron at times. Soon it dropped down to a trickling stream which might make melody and gladness as it flowed. Suppose it had been always full and steadily flowing, it would have brought gladness. If Jerusalem had no such actual river she had another stream that blessed her, that of Divine mercy. The psalmist is speaking of spiritual things, for he refers to the Holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High. All God was to the Jewish nation He is to His Church this day. II. THE CONSTITUENTS OF THIS GLADNESS. 1. The special relationship established. 2. The revelations vouchsafed. 3. In the intercourse maintained. 4. In the blessings bestowed. 5. In the holy effort called forth. 6. In the praise evoked. If God has given us reasons for joy, we ought to do all we can to increase the volume and force of the stream of joy rippling or rolling by to others. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *The river of Divine grace*.—I. THE GRACE OF GOD COMPARED TO A RIVER. 1. However large in its volume as it gets nearer the sea, every river is small in its beginnings. Thus, also, it is with the grace of God in the soul of man. The most experienced believer will testify that if he would trace back the work of grace, which has grown so steadily, to its first beginnings, the contrast is most marvellous. If he can at all identify its first commencement, he will tell you that it was some apparently trifling incident in his life—a word in season—an earnest sermon—an unaccountable thought—a sleepless night—a witty, but godly rebuke—a mother's parting charge—a loved one's consistent Christian influence and conduct—or a sudden check in a career of cruelty and sin. 2. It is possible for a river to be much contaminated by what is thrown into it, as it passes through populous towns; but it is impossible to change the nature of the water which is thus contaminated. Give the careful chemist a sufficient quantity of the most polluted river-water, and he can obtain from it, by filtration, distillation, and re-distillation, the pure and wholesome fluid which God has provided for us, and which He has guarded from defilement by decreeing that it shall everywhere and always have one fixed and unaltered composition, and that its constituent gases shall be so closely united that they can only be separated by a difficult and expensive process. Take the water of any river, fresh from its source, and you will readily perceive that it is pure in its nature. Need I say that it is so with the grace of God? 3. The grace of God, like a river, is perpetual in its movements. The lake may be stagnant, unless some river runs through it; the canal must be kept as free from any current as possible; but the river is always on the move. So it is with the grace of God in the soul of man. However hidden it may be, it is ever living and ever moving. Geographers tell us that the river Guadiana, in Spain, conceals itself in the earth for some fifteen miles of its course. But it is still there. In like manner, however concealed, the grace of God is at work in the heart of every believer. 4. It is peaceable in its course. "Still waters run deep." There may not be the stillness of the stagnant lake; but there is the quiet, or even the silence of the flowing river. But we must not take this characteristic of God's grace as a recommendation to us to shut up our cares or joys into our own souls, and never share them with others. God's people should not be silent when there is opportunity to declare what He hath done for their souls. 5. The grace of God, like a river, is powerful in its current. It is said that the Rio de la Plata, a South American river, which is two hundred miles broad where it enters the Atlantic Ocean, is so powerful in its current, that fresh water may be taken up by vessels sailing near it for many a league from land. But what is this physical force, compared with the irresistible power of the grace of God? "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." 6. It is plentiful in its supply. The river runs through meadow, and garden, and country, and city, serving some useful purpose wherever it goes. Here it nourishes the cornland upon which the precious crops are springing up; and there it affords a ready means of watering the carefully-tended garden. In one place it turns a mill, to afford maintenance to an honest family and grind corn for hundreds of other families; in another place it supplies water for a canal, to convey these products of industry to the populous town or the factor's store. Ever increasing, as it nears its destination, boats and even ships are borne upon its plentiful waters, until at last it joins the great and wide sea. Is it not so with the grace of God? Does not the figure fall far short of the fact? II. THE CHURCH OF GOD COMPARED TO A CITY. A city affords security for life and property. It furnishes facilities for the transaction of business. It ensures liberty to every honest and faithful citizen: and it provides society for all who reside in it. This is precisely

what the Church of God affords to its individual members—the most complete security for the believing soul, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; the only thorough liberty which the soul can experience, for “if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”; and the highest form of human society upon earth; for the apostle says (Eph. ii. 19, 20). The Church of God may be called a city, because it is a community in which law and order find their highest developments. “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. v. 14), is its unfailing spring of Christian obedience and activity. The Republic of France used to stamp upon its coins “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité”; but never did any government in this world succeed in realizing such an ideal of human happiness. True liberty, true equality, true friendship and brotherhood, are to be found only in the Church of God. It is a city set on an hill that cannot be hid. It may be called “the city of God,” because it abounds with houses of God—it is “the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.” Its walls are Salvation, and its gates Praise.

III. THE MEANS OF GRACE COMPARED TO STREAMS. Just as the faithful Israelites drank of the spiritual Rock which followed them, and “that rock was Christ” (1 Cor. x. 4), so with us to-day. There is the Word of God, ever ready to furnish us with some refreshing stream of Divine comfort and strength. There is the throne of grace, ever open to our supplications in time of need. There is the public worship of God, where we may taste afresh the calm which comes from the assurance of sins forgiven. There is the preaching of the Gospel, which should be to us “as cold waters to a thirsty soul,” and as “good news from a far country.” There are the occasional services of the Church, by which we are studiously and solemnly reminded of the immense privileges which belong to those who are truly servants of God. And there are, particularly, two copious and important streams, which deserve to be far more reverently and extensively used and appreciated—the Sacraments of the grace of God, Holy Baptism and the Holy Communion. (*J. Mitchell.*) *Gihon and the river of life*:—The allusion in the text is probably to Gihon, a copious fountain, whose streams were so abundant that they were like a river. It made the hearts of the people glad; and if we lived under the same climate as they, and had as great a scarcity of water as Jerusalem naturally had, we should have been glad too. But oh! how does it lead us up to something higher than this! How does it lead us up to the “River of life,” “the Gospel of the grace of God,” which has gladdened the Church of God in all ages, which gladdens it now, and which will gladden it to all eternity! I. THE CONTRAST.

1. In the certainty of supplies. Gihon might have been dried up; in times of great heat, the most abundant fountains in that country are often dried up; even Jordan, their greatest river—their only great river—is sometimes brought so low as to be reduced almost to a small stream. But when does the river of grace ever become dry? 2. Gihon's waters were but shallow. But who can fathom the depth of this river, the love from which it springs? 3. The course of Gihon might have been diverted, might have been turned into a new channel. When Jerusalem was besieged, it is not told us whether Titus turned the current of Gihon; yet it might have been so. But who can turn the current of God's grace? Who can dam up that stream? 4. There is a contrast in the quality of the waters. No doubt the inhabitants of Jerusalem drank of this river, and were glad. They drank and were refreshed, and thanked God. Yet it only slaked their thirst; it did not go above that. But what is there not in the pardon of my sin? what is there not in the acceptance of my person? what is there not in the clear witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God? If you enjoy that it shall be something more than slaking the thirst of the body. II. THE RESEMBLANCE.

1. The waters of this Gihon were brought to Jerusalem by an aqueduct, and carried by conduits through the streets into the temple. It went through one of the high hills of Jerusalem. Hezekiah, therefore, must have had great difficulty. And the whole current of the Gospel must run through difficulties—what to the natural sense would appear impossibilities. 2. There is another strong line of resemblance, which is, that the Lord employs human agency. God was at no loss about Gihon; had He a mind, it would have bubbled up in the midst of Jerusalem; He wanted not the hands of men; it might have sprung forth at the base of that hill on which the temple was built. But Hezekiah's zeal must be called forth—his loss of money, his loss of time, his patience in the midst of disappointments. The water was brought into Jerusalem, and it was brought by human agency. God delights in human agency. When that agency is laid in the dust, laid low at the foot of the Cross, He delights to make use of it. It is His glory to work by human instru-

mentality. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.—*The security of the Church*.—I. IN WHAT SENSE GOD MAY BE SAID TO BE IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH. 1. By His Word. 2. By His ministers. 3. By His Spirit. II. THE HAPPY CONSEQUENCES OF HIS PRESENCE IN REFERENCE TO HER FINAL SAFETY AND HER TIMELY DELIVERANCE FROM PRESENT TROUBLES. 1. How great are the privileges of true believers. 2. How necessary it is to ascertain our individual interest in these blessings. 3. How great is our encouragement to prayer. (*W. Mayers, M.A.*) God shall help her and that right early.—*God our helper*.—I. ISRAEL NEEDED THE DIVINE HELP and trusted in God for deliverance. The Church of to-day in its growth in grace needs like deliverance, but is at times slow to confess this. II. GOD MAKES HIS PEOPLE SENSIBLE OF THEIR NEED WHEN THEY FORGET IT. He did so by Israel. He said, "I will go and return to My place till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me early" (1 Kings viii. 38, 39). III. SUCH SENSE OF NEED REQUISITE TO MAKE MEN SEEK HIS ASSISTANCE IN PRAYER. (*J. Foot, D.D.*)

Vers. 8–11. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth.—*The desolations of the Lord, the consolations of His saints*.—I. A DECLARATION OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED. "Come, behold the works . . . desolations He hath made." See them—1. In the effects of wars, plagues, famines, revolutions, etc. But these are but the rough physic wherewith God will purge the diseased body of this earth from its innumerable ills. 2. In the overthrow of false worships. Idolatry, Rome, etc. 3. And false philosophies. 4. In the putting an end to war. II. A PROPHECY TO BE FULFILLED. It will be one day. Men ask, "Wherefore the delay?" and many say, "This is Divine sovereignty." Take care we do not make Divine sovereignty a sepulchre for our sins. Now, in reference to the delay in missionary success, it is owing, in part, to want of unanimity; to false ideas about God doing His own work; to want of real love to missions. I do not think Edward Irving right, who in his great sermon on missions maintained that we ought to send out our missionaries without purse or scrip, penniless. We do not believe that. Therefore we must have help. But we need most a real revival at home. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) God alone exalted.—I. THE ACTIVE AGENCY OF GOD. 1. In the multiplied disasters which abound. The various elements of nature, the raging hurricane, the thunders rolling along the sky, the lightnings flashing from cloud to cloud, the volcano vomiting rivers of fire, and the earthquake shaking kingdoms and levelling cities with the ground—all are His servants. 2. In the removal of the calamities by which we may be surrounded. II. THE EXCLUSIVE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. 1. The duty urged. "Be still." 2. The reason adduced. "Know"—(1) That God's supremacy is absolute. (2) That His justice is unimpeachable. (3) That His wisdom is unerring. (4) That His goodness is unbounded. 3. The assurance given. "I will be exalted," etc. III. THE ORACIOUS PROTECTION OF GOD. "The Lord of hosts is with us," etc. 1. The condition on which it is enjoyed. We must submit ourselves to the Lord and acknowledge His righteous claims before we can have Him on our side. 2. The blessedness it involves. "Happy is he," etc. 3. The effects. It should banish every painful apprehension, and fill us with transporting joy. (*Expository Outlines.*)

Ver. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire.—*War*.—I. AS IT AFFECTS THE HAPPINESS OF MANKIND. Think of—1. Its rapid extinction of innumerable lives without concern. 2. Think of the manner of their death. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister, is near to soothe their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings, or mingled with your dust? 3. But think, also, of the condition of those countries which are the scene of hostilities. How dreadful to hold everything at the mercy of an enemy. II. THE INFLUENCE OF WAR UPON THE MORALS OF MANKIND. It is both the offspring and the parent of injustice. The injury which the morals of a people sustain from an invading army is prodigious. The agitation and suspense universally prevalent are incompatible with everything which requires calm thought or serious reflection. In such a situation is it any wonder the duties of piety fall into neglect, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, and the gates of Zion mourn and are desolate? Familiarized to the sight of rapine and slaughter, the

people must acquire a hard and unfeeling character. Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace. Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace will return. How can we better imitate our Heavenly Father, than, when He is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence? Let us hope, more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other's views and sentiments will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion, therefore, all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessings we celebrate, and keep pace, as far as possible, with the movements of Divine beneficence. (*Robert Hall, M.A.*) *Methods for abolishing war*:—There are three methods at least adapted to crush this monster of war, and to banish it from the habitations of men. One is political, another is educational, and the other is Christian. The one pertains to the science of government, the other to the science of teaching, and the other to the science of remedial mercy. The first is good, the second is better, the third is best of all—it is infallible. I. THE POLITICAL METHOD. There is, I think, a form of human government adapted not only to arrest the progress of this demon, but to bind him in indissoluble chains. What is it? A cosmopolitan administration, a great federal government for the world, a government which shall bear, with some modification, the same relation to all the present kingdoms of the earth, as the Government of America to all the States with which it is united, or as the various counties and boroughs of England to the British rule. But how would such a world-wide government "cause wars to cease from the ends of the earth"? 1. It would promote free mercantile intercourse. Mutual temporal interests, if not strong enough to bind hearts in harmony, are strong enough to yoke limbs and brains together in a common work. 2. It would lead to the destruction of nationalities. Nationality is a "middle wall of partition" that keeps men asunder, and makes those on each side feel jealous and suspicious of the other. It is a false glass through which we look at other nations. A glass which magnifies their vices and minimizes their virtues. Nationality is an insolent, swaggering, greedy, heartless monster on the earth. 3. It would lead to the abolition of the despotic power. Who are the men that create wars? Not the people—not the farmer, the manufacturer, not the mechanic, and the labourer; but the arrogant and ruthless despots who by villainy or fortune have gained their way to power. Such men would have but little power in a thoroughly cosmopolitan government. II. THE EDUCATIONAL METHOD. What is this method? The indoctrinating of men with a true knowledge of their duty, their rights, and their interest. Whence is the knowledge of duty to be obtained? We have the revelation of an infallible ethical Teacher—One who was sent into the world by God to teach man his duty both to himself and his fellow-man. 1. Work into the people of the earth the conviction that all men are equal in the sight of God, that one man has rights as well as another, that each holds his being and his powers in trust from the Almighty, and must render to Him an account at last. And what then? Why then every man would respect his own individuality, employ his own individual talents, and work out his own individual beliefs, and despots would have to fight their own battles; men would no longer consent to be engines worked by tyrants. 2. Were men permeated with this true idea of their obligation to their fellow-men, could war exist a day? No. Men would feel that war was not only a curse to the community, destroying the lives of men and the means of human support, creating misery in all directions, and entailing poverty on posterity, but also a huge crime before Almighty God. 3. War is a tremendous mistake, not only in morals, but in policy. In what does the interest of a nation consist? In the means of support, comfort, and education. On what do these depend? On the amount of a nation's skilled industry. Anything that checks productive industry is a national curse. War is the greatest adversary to the prosperity of a community; war is destruction, both of the produce and of the producing power. III. THE CHRISTIAN METHOD. What is this method? The conquering of evil by good. This is something higher than ethics, Diviner than all mere human teaching. This is the essence of Christianity. Christianity is essentially pacific. This may be argued from the teachings of the New Testament, from the biography of Christ,

which is Christianity, and from the fact that its universal triumph will issue in universal peace. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*—*Stillness and the knowledge of God:*—There is a class of persons who are designated by divines and Church historians as Quietists. They have not formed a community, but they have been found in all communities. They are not distinguishable by their doctrines so much as by a certain temper or habit of mind. They are to be traced among the Religious Orders of the fourteenth century, amidst the tumults of the Protestant sects in the sixteenth, in our Civil Wars, in the splendour and corruption of the French capital under Louis XIV., in the bustle and restlessness of those days. Now, it is not fair to judge of these men from the representations of their opponents, or even from their own accounts, unless we know their surrounding circumstances; but in so far as they showed dislike to energetic qualities, to conflicts, and to mixture with their fellow-men, so far their spirit seems alien from that which we discern in the holy men whom the Bible tells of. For they seem to be living always in contention and strife, and they confess that they are meant to live in it. How can a Quietist accept the Psalms? must it not be to him a very uncongenial book? How could the man after God's own heart have been a warrior and yet have given thoughts and prayer and music to the Church in all periods? For there is a Sabbatical character in these psalms. They have a quiet of their own; all feel that. It has been their charm to the weary and tempest-tossed pilgrims; they have taught man how to commune with his own heart, how to be still, how to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for Him. And through man knowing thus the secret of being still, he has been able to toil manfully. And this is the quietism of the psalms, quietism in the midst of action, which only one who hears the call to act, and obeys it, can understand or prize. The ground of such quiet is given in our text. Only the belief of a Presence near us, with us, can inspire habitual awe, can keep us steady when all things are rocking around us, can take away the eagerness to move, or the cowardice which paralyzes movement. "Be still and know." You cannot know this deep and eternal truth unless you are still. If you keep the waters of your spirit in continual stir, you will see nothing in them, or only the reflection of your own perturbed self. "Be still and know that I am God." You may wonder to observe how often this form of speech is adopted in Scripture. He says, "I am God," not a conception of your minds, not One whom you make what He is by your mode of thinking of Him, but a living Person. And He is not a mere Being, not a mere Ruler, but the perfectly good Being, the perfectly righteous Ruler. And He alone can show you what the perfect goodness is. Israel had been trained in a school of suffering to feel the emptiness and falsehood of all visible creature worship, and that God alone was the Unseen King and Deliverer; they must seek in stillness to know Him, and must confess Him to be the Lord of their once revolted spirits, which in their efforts to be independent had become abject slaves. But the lesson would have been imperfect without the words that follow: "I will be exalted among," etc. Israel was not to despise the nations round about, or to think them of no value in God's sight. To do that was to despise God. Even as a comfort in any disaster, individual or national, the belief in God's presence, in His personality, in His goodness, would have been unsatisfactory, if it had not been accompanied with this belief in His power, with this assurance that it would one day make itself manifest over the universe, and would crush all that opposed it. It is a great question for us to ask ourselves, whether both these dangers are not assailing us at this time, and from the same cause? The words, "Be still and know that I am God," sound like strange words in the ears of most of us. "How can we be still," we ask, "while all things are in movement, while all things are unsettled? How can we be still while every one is hasting to be rich, hasting to get beyond his neighbour? How can we be still when all the political world is full of slumbering fires, ready to break forth? How can we be still while all the religious world is full of controversies, tumults, hatreds?" The answer surely should be, "Because there is all this mutation, restlessness, insecurity, therefore this is the very time to obey the command, Be still. For assuredly if we do not, we never shall know that the Lord He is God; we shall not believe, however we may pretend it, that He abides, and that He is with us, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the depths of the sea." And if we have not that belief, what other can we have?



What other will be worth anything to us? (F. D. Maurice, M.A.) *God's working in the world*:—The words, "Be still, and know that I am God," have usually been taken as an invitation to believing hearts to trust and not be afraid. It is very natural that this should be so, especially as that interpretation harmonizes with the prevailing message of the psalm. As a matter of fact, however, they seem to have been addressed to the enemies of God's people, those who were making war upon them oppressively. The words are not a message of soothing but an utterance of prohibition: Be still. Desist from making war upon My people, and know that I am God, God whose will it is that all nations should own His sovereign sway. 1. Let us consider the words first from this point of view, which is that of the psalmist. Then we can go on to think of them in the sense in which faith has loved to interpret them. "Be still from war, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth." Admittedly, when God is exalted among the nations in the earth, there will be no more war. Where selfishness and tyranny have given place to obedience to God and consequent love to man war cannot possibly be. It is quite true that God has made desolations in the earth by means of war. From the history of Israel to the history of England the Spirit of the Lord has come upon God-fearing men, and bidden them make war either in self-defence or in defence of the weak against some tyrant. On the other hand, it is equally true that God maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The more God-fearing a nation becomes, the more reluctant it is to make war. The knowledge of God involves forbearance towards enemies, the desire to use every persuasion rather than come to an open rupture. Above all, it involves regard for human life and for the sentiment of goodwill amongst men, which is more precious even than life. God says that men are not to learn war any more, but to learn to know Him. Let be, and know that I am God; and let all the nations know. Go ye into all the world, not carrying weapons of war, but the Gospel of peace. 2. In the second place, let us take the words of our text in the more generally accepted sense. It is almost a commonplace that men in the midst of trial do not think of the love of God except to conclude that He has forgotten to be gracious. And yet all the time He is keeping watch, as much in the time of darkness as in the light. I sometimes think that life is like a voyage regarded from the point of view of a passenger. Some travellers are good sailors, others are not. Some make their voyage easily, others not; but the captain of the vessel is equally concerned for the lives and safety of all. While you are lying in your berth ill during the storm you don't blame the captain because the sea is rough. You do not see the man at his post on the bridge while you are below, but you are quite sure he is there. You saw him there during the fair weather when you were on deck. You noticed his vigilant care even when the sea was calm. You do not imagine for a moment that his vigilance is relaxed during the storm. God is watching over your soul in all its voyage through life. No storm can endanger your safety if you are trusting Him. But you will make shipwreck of your life if you take the control of it out of His hands in time of storm. I do not wish to pretend for a moment that faith is always easy, that it is easy to put a restraint upon impatience. But the effort must be made. It is calamitous if in the storms of life we lose our faith in the Captain. If we obey His order, "Be still, and know that I am God," our confidence and peace will be maintained. Trouble does not always become easier to bear with time: sometimes it becomes harder; and there is nothing left but a choice between faith and despair. George Eliot well expresses this when she says: "The first shock of trouble may produce an excitement which is transient strength. It is in the slow changed life that follows—in the time when sorrow has become stale—in the time when day follows day in dull unexpectant sameness, and trial is a dreary routine—it is then that despair threatens; it is then that the peremptory hunger of the soul is felt, and eye and ear are strained after some unlearned secret of our existence, which shall give to endurance the nature of satisfaction." Whether we recognize it or not, glumness is the result of shutting the door of our heart against the Holy Spirit, and putting our foot against it. No sufferer is ever glum who says, "I cannot close my heart to Thee who seekst me through pain." They sometimes call it temperament; it is selfishness pure and simple, the refusal to cultivate a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize, the refusal to cultivate the sympathetic spirit which rejoices with those that rejoice and weeps with those that weep. 3. We are not all sufferers, by any means, and many of us are active workers for God. There is a message for us also in this verse,

"Be still, and know that I am God." We sometimes leave too small a part for God in our work. We think that our carefully prepared sermon or lesson will do its own work, and forget to pray that the Holy Spirit may carry it home. We can teach truth. God alone can make that truth life-giving. Recall the legend of Pygmalion and Galatea. The sculptor Pygmalion had made a perfect statue of a beautiful woman. She was so beautiful that he fell in love with her. But one thing he could not do, and that was to give her life. So he prayed to the goddess of love and she granted his petition and touched the statue into life. Burne-Jones has painted the incident in four scenes, which he calls—"The Heart Desires;" "The Hand Refrains;" "The Godhead Fires;" "The Soul Attains." Every Christian worker must pass his work through these four stages if he is to be successful. (*R. M. Moffat, M.A.*) *The realm of silence*:—The realm of silence—do we know anything about it? In these days of push and rush and roar, is it possible to get any appreciation for the calm and unruffled and retired spaces of existence? When one begins to speak of stillness some are afraid. "Everything was so still, I was frightened," said a lady friend to me of her experience in a retired part of Wordsworth's Lake District. Be still—and know. There are some forms of knowledge which necessitate stillness. Self-knowledge, God-knowledge—these can never be had until we have learned to be still. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." "Their strength is to sit still." If God had not divided our life into days, and compelled us to sleep, we should run out our energy in a very few years of perpetual dissipation. In some countries it would not be necessary to insist on stillness as a condition of knowledge. Where people are temperamentally calm and reflective we might leave the parts of the Bible which insist on a wise passiveness in life. There is a difference—an immense difference—between the spirit of the old Bible times as represented in the Psalms and our own as represented in the newspapers. "The times explain everything:" fuss, and excursion, and noise, and rattle, and panic, and dissolution, and bank-failure, and bankruptcy, and political crises. It is very significant how all the greatly inspired men were trained in the school of silence. Moses, hidden away forty years in the loneliness of sheep pastures, and again forty days in the depths of Sinai, and when he came down his face shone. That told the story. Ezekiel, sauntering by the way of the river alone. Isaiah saw the King in His beauty when no one was with him. Daniel was accustomed (it was an old habit of his) to go into the quiet of his chamber three times a day. Paul must spend three lonely years in Arabia. John must go to Patmos before he could write the Book of the Revelation and see earth and its history from the height of heaven. Without large spaces of stillness there can be no deep thoughtfulness—Sabbath. And an age which is all rattle, and roar and noise, and self-advertisement, and theatricality needs, if any age ever needed it, to be called back to the fact that there is a kind of knowledge which can never be had except in stillness. But to-day there is no silence, no privacy, and men seldom hear the voice of God speaking in the depths of their own spirit, as did Elijah in his cave. We are full of opinions. They have floated our way and got lodgment, like thistle-down in the hair, but they are not ours. They belong to the general community. Nothing is really ours which is not a conviction, something in which we are rooted and grounded. The point I want to make emphatic is this: that every man has his own personal relation to God, positive or negative, as every flower has its own personal relation to the sun: that there are forms of knowledge which are external and common—like bought furniture in a house, these belong to us in communities—but there is a knowledge which is to be had only in the stillness of devout meditation—the soul's personal knowledge of God. "Be still, and know that I am—that I am God." It does not come from effort. It comes from reposefulness. Often it is true of men, "Their strength is to sit still"; to sit still as the painter before a great master, simply receiving, as a child reposing in its mother's arms. The more active, busy and forceful our external life is, the greater the necessity for Sabbath spaces of stillness in the unrevealed centres of our human life. The storm-swept lake reflects no stars, and the perpetually busy, energetic and unquiet life, like "the troubled sea which cannot rest," makes no response to the overarching heavens, gemmed with those Divine promises of immortality which have purified and ennobled the souls of God's elect saints. Let us remember that all depths are silent, depths of space as well as depths of thought. The o'erbrooding heavens are silent, speechless to all but the most meditative souls. Extreme emotions of all kinds are silent. (*R. Thomas.*) *Quietness*:—There is not a heart assailed by

trouble, and trembling at the prospect of further ills to come, to which the voice of encouragement and heavenly assurance is not at this moment saying, "Be still, and know that I am God." I. It is addressed, above all others, to **THE CAREFUL, WHO KNOWING NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH, OUT OF THAT IGNORANCE DRAW FEAR AND ANXIETY THAT KNOWS NO REST.** Is there One who feeds the young lion and clothes the grass of the field, and shall He not much more feed and clothe thee, O thou of little faith? If God be for thee who can be against thee? II. **HE WHO IS EARNESTLY LOOKING FOR THE TRUTH,** with serious search and humble inquiry and importunate prayer seeking to be taught more of the love of Christ and the will of God, and who makes it part of his daily joy and duty to search the Scriptures that so he may grow in the knowledge his soul desires, that man finds his task a healthy exercise; no feverish excitement waits upon his inquiry, but more and more of peace is shed over his heart and life as he advances in this heavenly knowledge. III. **IMPULSIVE HEARTS THAT RISE WITH EVERY HOPE AND SINK WITH EVERY DISCOURAGEMENT IN THE WORK OF LIFE,** full of purposes and aims for good, seizing upon every instrument to help them, and finding the insufficiency of each, and with every successive failure adding to that store of disappointment which may one day overlay the springs of hope within them; or minds of steadier energy ever active and not easily cast down, who have thrown their strength into labours of love and usefulness, but are struggling to do the Lord's work without the arm of the Lord, who are ever ready to charge their failures upon secondary causes, and to impute their successes to the instruments used in effecting them, these perhaps are taught at length that "the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." IV. **WHEN AMBITION IS FRETTING THE MIND AND DISTRACTING IT WITH WORLDLY HOPES AND JEALOUSIES,** when the flattery of man on the one hand and the selfishness of man on the other are stirring up delusive expectations and creating bitter disappointments, when all the influences of earthly desire and the fascinations of wealth and honour and ease are leading a man on to trust the shadows of strength which many have fatally trusted before, to believe in idle promises, to exaggerate unmeaning professions, to sacrifice an honest independence, to let meanness creep into his spirit and the fever of self-seeking into his veins, the Word of the Lord says to that foolish heart, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Be still, and know that I am God!" V. **WHEN WE ARE CALLED UPON TO WORK OUT OUR OWN SALVATION** it is with fear and trembling indeed, but with the calm assurance nevertheless that it is God which worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Be still then and put your trust in the blood of the everlasting covenant; work, but work in peace and the spirit of an unofficial service; seek your God, not as the prophets of Baal did, with extravagant zeal and obtrusive crying and impatient torturing of their flesh, but as Elijah the prophet of the Lord, who in calmness and confidence "at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel and that I am Thy servant." VI. "To strive about words to no profit but to the subverting of the hearers," **TO MAKE RELIGION THE WORK OF A DABBING TONGUE AND A CONTENTIOUS SPIRIT, TO THINK THAT THE VICTORY OF TRUTH IS TO BE WON AS NATIONS WIN THEIR VICTORIES IN THE FIELD, BY PLANTING ARMY AGAINST ARMY,** meeting rage with rage, and stratagem with stratagem, and clamour with clamour; this is not pleasing to the Lord, who says—(2 Tim. ii. 24). VII. And ye, the **CHILDREN OF HABITUAL SADNESS,** who live among the memories of the past and carry sorrow with you as your heart's raiment, and would not part with that familiar companion which lives with hope and faith in your breast, and is sanctified with that holy communion, forget not that human grief carries with it and will always retain the seeds of mortal rebellion; the impulses of natural affection and the longings of human passion will break out from time to time; and many a heart whose burthen has long been cast upon the Lord, which has long been familiar with the love of Christ, which has long felt the consolation of prayer and the strength of the Word of God, has moments when it would seem as if the whole lesson of trust must be learnt again, moments of unrest and craving in which it longs for the voice that shall gently call it back to the Cross and whisper, "Be still, and know that I am God!" (*A. J. Maclean, M.A.*) "Be still":—The command is assuring. Fear not for the ark, for the kingdom, for yourself. God will not fail. I. **WHY WE NEED THIS INJUNCTION, "Be still!"** 1. On account of our ignorance and presumption, we see but a fragment of God's design and work. If we saw the whole campaign and consummation! 2. Haste and

rashness of our judgment. 3. Conclusions without taking God into account. II. THE STILLNESS ENJOINED not that of indolence, indifference, stoicism or despair, but of humility, observation, expectation. III. THUS SEE GOD IN ALL, riding the whirlwind, bringing forth judgment unto victory. (*Homiletic Review*.) *Be still and believe*:—It is not easy to be still in this rough and restless world. Yet God says, "Be still"; and He says also (Isa. xxx. 15). I. BE STILL, AND THOU SHALT KNOW I CAN PUT ALL ENEMIES TO SHAME. II. BE STILL, AND THOU SHALT KNOW THAT I CAN UPHOLD MY OWN TRUTH IN A DAY OF ERROR. Is not My truth precious to Me? And My Book of truth, is it not above all books in Mine eyes? I am God. III. BE STILL, AND THOU SHALT KNOW THAT I CAN SAY TO THE NATIONS, PEACE, BE STILL. The waves rise, but I am mightier than all. These tumults do not touch My throne. Take no alarm because of this world-wide resistance to My authority and law. I am still God. IV. BE STILL, AND THOU SHALT SEE THE GLORIOUS ISSUE OF ALL THESE CONFUSIONS. This world is My world, and thou shalt see it to be such; this earth shall yet be the abode of the righteous. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The use of religion in a time of affliction*.—I. OUR DUTY. "Be still." 1. A negative kind of submission; I mean the restraints we ought to lay upon our angry and tumultuous passions. This is the first thing to be attempted, when perhaps we can proceed no farther. 2. To be still is to preserve a calm and composed temper of mind under affliction. 3. A higher degree of patience and submission than even this is required of us; and that is, to justify, approve and commend the Divine proceedings. II. OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THE PRACTICE OF THESE GREAT AND DIFFICULT DUTIES. 1. There is a God. Set Him before you, in all His adorable perfections. Apprehend Him present—immediately present with you, closely watching and accurately observing all your thoughts, reasonings, dispositions and affections. 2. God, who is thus a witness of what passes in our breasts, is the great Governor of the world, and hath a concern in bringing about those events which occasion all this tumult of our passions. 3. The God who does it has an unquestionable right to do it. 4. While God thus proclaims Himself a Sovereign, He would have us consider Him as most just and wise in all His proceedings. 5. The goodness of God, and the covenant-relation which subsists between Him and us. 6. All that God does is in reference to some future design. III. THE REGARD WE ARE REQUIRED TO PAY TO THESE INTERESTING TRUTHS. It is our duty to—1. Well weigh and consider them. 2. Believe them. 3. Apply them to ourselves, and to our own immediate circumstances. 4. Use fervent prayer. CONCLUSION. 1. As to such who make light of their afflictions, or, to use the words of Scripture, despise the chastening of the Lord. That insensibility which you account your happiness is not the stillness and composure which the text recommends. Know the rod and who hath appointed it. Inquire wherefore it is he contends with you. Implore the forgiveness of what is amiss. And rest not satisfied without feeling the salutary effect of your affliction, to embitter sin to you, to wean your hearts from the world, and to raise your affections to heaven. 2. As to those who are apt to faint under the rebukes of Providence—a temper to which Christians are usually more prone than to that just described. With you I most tenderly sympathize. Let me, however, entreat you to turn your attention for a while from your affliction; think with yourselves how much worse your condition would have been if God had treated you according to your deserts: consider the mercies you still enjoy; above all, take sanctuary at the throne of grace, and there pour out your tears of sorrow to Him who hath an ear to hear, and a heart to pity, the afflicted. 3. As to those who are enabled to practise the great duties I have been describing, how great is your mercy! You may well glory in your infirmities, since the power of Christ thus rests upon you. An end, an important end, is already attained by your having been afflicted. Oh, let patience have its perfect work! (*J. Stennet, D.D.*) *Stillness*.—I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE CONVEYED IN THE WORDS. The spirit of man must be taught by the Spirit of God, or it cannot know Him; and being taught implies receiving impressions; it implies a gradual advance in knowledge, the pupil imbibing the mind of the Teacher, and becoming more and more like Him till it knows even as it is known. Now it is beyond question that this education of the spirit for God is the highest work of man; and must it not then require the shutting out of all other sights and sounds that the heart may be alone with God? Why you think it needful to sit alone hour after hour, day after day, to unravel the intricacies and overcome the difficulties of business! You think it a matter of course that if you are to master a book, or a subject, or a science, you must have leisure from

distracting occupations, and give yourself for a time to that one thing! If then to learn man's business requires stillness from other work; if to understand any of God's works demands stillness from other thoughts, shall we not, to know God Himself, need stillness of spirit, stillness alike from the bustle of active life, and the engrossment of thinking upon earthly things, and the distraction of fear, and the uneasiness of anxiety? II. ITS PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE TEXT TO OURSELVES. 1. Let it speak to the man who is engrossed in work, trade, business, or profession. The week is gone. Sunday and working day are past. And when was the spirit still and alone with its God? When did it read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest His holy Word? When did it examine itself, and confess its sins, and dwell on God's promises, and listen for the whispers of His Spirit, and as a docile pupil receive and reflect His mind? 2. Let the text speak to those who are distracted by sorrow, fear, or anxiety. The heart broken by sorrow chafes and frets, and is often too unsettled for a season calmly to receive the lesson which God is come to teach. The spirit trembling in fear looks to the right hand and to the left, and despairing of human help is too agitated quietly to wait for God. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." "Be still, and know that I am God." 3. This text will speak to those who resist God's Spirit and oppose His will. (*Canon Morse.*) *Quietude necessary for a fuller knowledge of God*.—I. A WORD OF WARNING ADDRESSED TO NATIONS WHEN INFLAMED WITH THE PASSION FOR CONQUEST AND AGGRANDIZEMENT. War is a time when the worst passions of men are roused, the purest motives of the most patriotic are misunderstood, political life is embittered with the acrimony of party strife and ambition, the unscrupulous are tempted to make capital out of the public troubles, and the mind is too disturbed and demoralized to rise to the calm sublimities of Divine things. Not in the wild commotion and brazen clangour of the battlefield, not in the whizzing hurricane of national strife and uproar, not in the rush and fret of excessive worldly care, is the knowledge of God best acquired; but in the solitude of retirement, in the hush and stillness of some meditative retreat, where the tocsin of war is never heard, and the roar of cannon and clash of arms never penetrate—"Be still, and know that I am God." II. A WORD ADDRESSED TO THE SINCERE INQUIRER AFTER THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, BY PURELY INTELLECTUAL MEANS. Not in the strain and tussle of intellectual strife, not in the fret and ferment of the proud and restive mind, can God be known; but when the baffled inquirer acknowledges his weakness and defeat, when he looks with humble wistfulness into the darkness that has deepened around him, when he surrenders and stakes his all on the mercy of the Unseen—then, in that solemn moment of pause and conscious self-helplessness, God draws near, and there glows before the soul a sublime vision of the greatness and goodness of the only living and true God—"Be still, and know that I am God!" III. A WORD ADDRESSED TO THE MAN WHO IS TEMPTED TO MURMUR AT THE HARDSHIPS OF A SUFFERING LOT. Life has its sombre side to all, more or less, and bravely as we may strive to look at the bright side, and to make the best of things, there are moments when our way is dark. Can it be wondered that from the pierced heart of suffering humanity a cry of anguish should rise that now and then overpowers the meekest submission and the most heroic patience, and find a plaintive voice in the trembling remonstrance—"O Lord, how long? Why these repeated strokes? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent!" It is then that God draws near and speaks—"Be still, and know that I am God. Cease thy sad complaining. Be hushed, my child. Know that I am here. I have not forgotten thee. I am ruling still. It is thus I am leading thee to teach thee. Know that I am God, even *thy* God!" There! thou art blessed. (*G. Barlow.*) *The repose of faith*.—In all the more delicate cases of surgery the success of the operation is hardly more dependent upon the skill of the practitioner than it is upon the quietness and self-control of the patient. To suppress all irritability and nervous alarms; to submit, in entire reliance, to the course of discipline recommended; to endure pain without flinching, and to encourage, as far as possible, every hopeful impression; all these conduce directly to a happy issue; while they render the task of ministering to the relief of the sufferer himself a labour of love, and afford an edifying and comfortable and blessed example to all around him. Now, this is just the temper recommended in the text, as one of the truest characteristics of God's servants. I. WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN. We are not here recommended to sit down in a state of utter indifference and inaction, waiting with folded hands until God shall marvellously interfere for our deliverance. II. WHAT

IT DOES MEAN. "Be still;" cease from all vain opposition, from all ineffectual struggles; restrain all petulant curiosity; subdue all unruly desires; submit meekly and thankfully to His irresistible authority, and be convinced, whatever may befall you, that the Judge of all the earth shall assuredly do right. III. APPLY THE COMMANDMENT TO PARTICULAR CASES. 1. With regard to worldly successes and worldly reverses, what continual cause we find for mistrusting our first impressions respecting them! That which seems most adverse to our happiness often proves the very means of establishing it upon a right foundation; while the realization of our most ardent desires entails countless evils and disappointments which far outweigh all the joy of success. In the Lord's Prayer there is but one direct petition for earthly good, and that couched in the most moderate terms, "Give us this day our daily bread." Every other need is embraced in that humble expression, "Thy will be done!" 2. Look now to God's dealings in things spiritual. No doubt there is such a thing as a wholesome and righteous uprousing of the powers and desires which God has bestowed, lest they sink into mere lethargy and insensibility; but there is danger, on the other hand, of our mistaking an active state of the soul for a fruitful one. Our Lord speaks of the good seed which is received in an honest and good heart as bringing forth fruit "with patience." It is no forced and hasty growth, shooting out in the showy but unproductive luxuriance of leaves, and bearing little, if any, perfect grain; there is a solidity and strength in the stem, and a gradual development of power, which gives certain promise of a plentiful harvest in the end. (*T. Ainger, M.A.*) *Lessons from the tomb*:—The old proverb says, "Speech is silvery, but silence is golden," and there are times when its truth becomes apparent. And where can silence be so fitting as when God has spoken in one of those sudden and mysterious dispensations of His providence, asserting His own sovereignty and instructing His erring creatures? The presence of death, the immediate contact with the unknown realities of the world of spirits, are surely, at any time, enough to sober the most reckless, arouse the most indifferent, awe the most trifling, and still the most giddy spirit. But when there are circumstances throwing around the event more than its ordinary awfulness—when a few brief hours or days have sufficed to change the bloom and vigour of health into the cold unbroken silence of the tomb, then, surely, must the effect be yet deeper, and the soul, filled with an overwhelming awe, may well say with David, "I was dumb with silence—I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." I. THE MODE IN WHICH THE ANGEL OF DEATH DOES HIS WORK is fitted ever to impress on us this lesson. It might have been that a generation should have had its allotted time and its peculiar work—that side by side the companions of childhood and youth should have pursued their path, till for all it terminated at the same moment in the grave. The term fixed for human life might have been uniform and invariable. Every element of uncertainty might have been removed, and a man have been able from the very dawning of intelligence to calculate and anticipate the hour of his death. Need I say how great a change would thus have been introduced, or indicate how evil the effects that would have been produced on the majority of men? The thought of death would have been put away until the dreaded hour approached. God has mercifully not left us thus. He has encircled us with monitors to remind us of our mortality, to silence every thought of self-confidence, to make us feel how frail we are. We are told of the great Sultan Saladin, that in the midst of the magnificence by which he was surrounded, he had a slave whose business it was daily to remind him that he was mortal. Wise, indeed, to perceive that the consciousness of his power, the pride of majesty, the adulations of those round him were fitted to banish this thought from the mind, and that the fact, thus liable to be forgotten, was that which ought to be ever present to the mind. Yet, surely, there were voices distinct enough to render such a monitor needless. Death doing his work around us is ever speaking to us. Sudden death, especially, should produce this impression. Now, God by such deaths rebukes our carelessness and pleads with us on our own behalf. Yours may be the next door at which Death shall knock. II. LET US LEARN A LESSON OF RESIGNATION. A more wretched feeling cannot come across the soul in moments like these, than the agonizing doubt of the reality of God's providence. A calamity, sudden, terrible and overwhelming, has come upon us—the reason staggers and the heart sinks beneath the blow. The whole appears so contrary to every principle of God's government, and every conception of His love, that we begin to ask, "Is there a God that judgeth on the earth? Is there a Judge of the whole earth who will do right? Are we the children of a loving

Father who makes all things work together for good?" If so, how can these things be? "Surely Thou hast made all men in vain." Happy for the spirit that in such dread hour can hear and obey the voice, "Be still, and know that I am God." III. LET US CHERISH PATIENT BUT CONFIDENT HOPE. There is deep significance in the apostle's words, "We sorrow not as those who have no hope." We must sorrow. These partings rend our hearts within us, and we cannot but sorrow. But we must not so discredit our profession and misrepresent the Gospel as to sorrow with that wild despair which may not unnaturally be associated with unbelief. Our burden may be very heavy, but hope relieves its pressure, and as it whispers in our ears tales of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," not only helps us to toil on, but teaches us some of the songs of Zion to which we baste, with which to beguile the way. That hope, which rests on the promises of a faithful God, and therefore cannot make ashamed, is your strength and consolation. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *Submit*.—I. AN IMPLICATION OF RESISTANCE. For when it is said, "Be still," resistance, turbulence, commotion are implied. And there is in all men a disposition to resist, to murmur and to rebel. Sometimes—1. Against the dispensations of Providence, when there are afflictions. And sometimes—2. Against those of Divine grace. Now—3. Why is this? It is owing to human ignorance and human sin. II. AN ASSERTION OF SUPREMACY. "Know that I am God." Note—1. The fact—"I am God." He is here asserting His superiority to the idols of the heathen. But the recollection of His supremacy will help us to cease from rebelling against Him. We think of His absolute and unimpeachable sovereignty: His pure and equitable justice. 2. Let us apply this fact. Let it be understood, admitted, and let it have all the influence which its importance demands. III. A CLAIM OF SUBMISSION. "Be still"—be silent and submissive. As Eli, say, "It is the Lord." (*James Parsons.*) *Be still, and know God*.—Every period and every place have their peculiar obstructions to the Christian life. The mistake committed by theologians is in making the Devil but one, when his name is Legion. The great inductive philosopher assigned four kinds of prejudices to man. The devils might have a similar classification, and there is one of those which come from the market, or from intercourse and association with mankind, that might without slander be called the Devil of Haste. We live in an age of hurry. Life, that was formerly likened to a journey, a voyage, or a pilgrimage, has become a race, a chase, in which not bit and bridle, but spurs and whip, are deemed the rider's best equipment. A late writer has said that "a railway train should be the emblem on our shield, with the motto, Hurrah!" In short, the devil of Haste has entered in and possessed us. He hurries us so fast that we have no time to "be still and know God," no place quiet enough to read our Bibles and say our prayers. Or, if he should put his hand upon religion, he wishes, to use the vulgar phrase, to "put it through quick," and he has therefore a high estimation of camp-meetings and revivals, and the whole enginery of fear and excitement, as speedy labour-saving machines to accomplish a work which, in the slower times of prophets, apostles, martyrs and saints, it was thought could only be effected by a lifetime of prayer and charity and self-denial. This style of Christianity will be perishable, we apprehend, as it is rapid. Character is not a blow struck once, but a growth. And we see this same forcing method employed in education: everything must be done rapidly. We have short, twelve-lesson modes of learning, forcing processes of prizes, and embittering emulation to stuff the youthful memory with the largest amount of studies, whether understood and digested or not. Hence tender plants are watered so much that they are drowned. The fuel is heaped so abundantly on the fire that every spark goes out. But this hot and impatient mode of life leaves a host of duties not done, a multitude of truths not meditated, a world of pleasures not enjoyed, and a constellation of graces and virtues not cultivated and assimilated. Who indeed can doubt that, if men would oftener stop in their hurried life and recur to the First Great Cause, and cast a look to heaven while toiling and worrying themselves among their earthly cares, they would be far better armed against temptation, and that fountains of unfading happiness would be opened to the thirsting soul? Who is weak when the thought of God is in his mind? Who is wretched when he consciously rests on an Almighty arm? Alas! how much of the time we call life is really the death, the deadness, of the living part! We vacate the ample palace of the soul, to take up mean and miserable quarters in the hut of coarse and brutish worldliness. How much we need to do what we were told when children to do in reading, mind our

stops! Did a day never pass when close and absorbing business so steeped your senses in forgetfulness, that even the thought of God, much less a calm and conscious leaning upon Him, a felt uplifting and grateful opening of the heart to Him, as the Fountain of light and love, never for one blessed instant visited you from twilight to twilight? The prisoner of worldliness is sunk in a subterranean dungeon, whose solid darkness is not pierced by a solitary ray. Let us know that quicksilver is not the only metal, nor lightning the only element. Instead of this feverish and eager rushing across the stage of life, as of the horse plunging into the battle, we will lift up serene brows to the calm heavens, and we will repeat in a low tone that beautiful strain, which has been chanted for two thousand years, to quiet the restless bosom of humanity, never more restless than here and now—"Be still, and know that I am God." (*A. A. Livermore.*) *Submission to God*:—I. A SUBMISSION TO WHATEVER GOD COMMANDS. II. A SUBMISSION TO WHATEVER GOD DOES. III. A SUBMISSION TO THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH HE IS PLEASED TO CARRY ON HIS WORK, EITHER IN OUR OWN SOULS OR IN THE SOULS OF OTHERS. IV. A SUBMISSION TO GOD, IN REFERENCE TO WHATEVER HE HAS PROMISED. (*N. Bangs, D.D.*) *Confidence in missions*:—Our knowledge of the vastness of the heathen world has a distressing influence, our knowledge of the strength of its superstitions, of its false religions. There is the tardiness of the purposes of God, the slowness of His procedure. It may be said that this is characteristic of His ways and works. Dwell on this thought, that in God we may have the stillness of confidence in regard to the future of His gracious rule among the heathen. I. THE HEATHEN BELONG TO GOD. He makes the claim, "All souls are Mine!" But "other sheep I have." He is the God of the valleys as well as of the hills. The Asiatic is as nearly related to God as the European, and the African is as dear to Him as an Englishman. II. IN THE LOWEST AND THE MOST IGNORANT OF THE HEATHEN THERE IS A CAPACITY FOR GOD. When we speak of "the heathen world" we know that we are to distinguish between some races and others. Among some we find old civilizations, philosophies and religions; China and Japan are different from Africa; India and Ceylon are different from some of the islands of the seas. But the people who have the greatest knowledge and civilization are as much in need of the Gospel as those most deeply sunk in the abyss of barbarism and ignorance. "Leave them alone to work out their own salvation if they need it, by and by they will evolve into something better." Yes, we are thankful for the conviction that they will evolve into a higher state, but there are means essential for this purpose. The same Gospel is needed by the most advanced as by the most degraded, by the barbarians of Melita, and the philosophers of Athens, by the painted savage and the proud Brahmin. There is a capacity in the very lowest for God. When you deal with the dullest, the most stolid, the most ignorant, only get beneath the crust of habit, formed by years of sensuality, indifference, and prejudice, and you will find a home for the truth—a something within responding to the Word without. "I will be exalted in the earth." We are warranted in saying that the victories already achieved are such as to encourage and strengthen confidence; but our firmest ground of trust is this, we know that He is God. (*James Owen.*) *Knowledge and silence*:—The message of my text, broadly stated, seems to be this: that the soul must make for itself a great silence from all other voices ere it can hear aright the Divine messages which give it the fullest and deepest knowledge of its God. And so all knowledge more or less needs silence, that it may sink into the soul and become part of its own inner and essential life. And it is in silence, too, that there grows that power that is the first-born child of knowledge. Silently the mightiest and most enduring forces act; silently the silver moon drags along the trailing skirts of her glory the ocean's heaving tides; silently the frost binds in icy fetters the great lakes and flowing streams; silently the vernal sun breaks again those wintry chains and sends forth the rivers to leap in recovered freedom on their course to the far-off sea: silently the trees put forth their branches and gain the strength that shall enable them to hurl back defeated the fury of a hundred storms; silently the harvests ripen under glowing sun and silver moon and quiet stars; silently the great planets perform their measured march across the infinite fields of night. And as in nature, so in mind; it is silently that thought is added to thought, and there is erected the stately palace of intellectual truth or artistic beauty; it is not in the noise or din of the street, not amid the clamorous calls of the market or the forum or the banquet-hall, but in the silence of the chemist's laboratory or the astronomer's watch-tower or the philosopher's study; it is there, it is thus, that the great



triumphs of human intellect, the most splendid achievements of human genius, have had their birth. What wonder, then, that God should demand silence as one of the needed conditions for the attainment of that supremest knowledge, that most transcendent power of which our poor humanity is capable—the knowledge that He is God? (*Canon O'Meara.*) *Knowledge through silence*:—"Be still and know." How can God give us visions when life is hurrying at a precipitate rate? I have stood in the National Gallery and seen people gallop round the chamber and glance at twelve of Turner's pictures in the space of five minutes. Surely we might say to such trippers, "Be still, and know Turner!" Gaze quietly at one little bit of cloud or at one branch, or at one wave of the sea, or at one ray of the drifting moon. "Be still, and know Turner." But God has difficulty in getting us still. This is perhaps why He has sometimes employed the ministry of dreams. Men have had "visions in the night." In the daytime I have a diviner visitor in the shape of some worthy thought, or nobler impulse, or hallowed suggestion, but I am in such feverish haste that I do not heed it, and pass along. I do not "turn aside to see this great thing," and so I lose the heavenly vision. If I would know more of God I must relax the strain and moderate the pace. I must "be still." (*J. H. Jowett.*) **I will be exalted among the heathen.**—*The exaltation of Christ among the nations*:—There is nothing more remarkable in the history of the Hebrew people than their connection with surrounding nations. That connection is strikingly predicted in the covenant which Jehovah made with the founder of their race: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This promise began to take effect immediately upon its announcement. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad." And the Spirit of Christ pervaded and conducted the history of Israel. There can be no doubt that that measure of truth which is now found in the ancient writings of other faiths was for the most part derived from the connection of Israel with Egypt, with Babylon, with Syria, Persia, and India. The advent of Christ brings us to the perfect fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. The wonderful declaration of Christ—"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Myself"—was explained; first, by the lifting up of the Crucifixion; secondly, by the resurrection of the Crucified; and thirdly, by the command of the Risen Redeemer. "All power hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore," etc. In this command the mission of exalting God among the nations was directly entrusted to His apostles and followers by the Head of the Church. The Church has no other business on earth but to exalt God among the nations. Her gifts, her ministries, her sacraments, her literature, her spiritual authority have neither divinity nor meaning except in so far as they bear upon the conversion of the world to Christ. For the exaltation of God among the nations is the ascendancy of Christ, to whom God hath given "the name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9-11). If it be true that in spite of freedom of inquiry, and that licence of speculation which has accompanied the advancement of science, there never was a time when the Church exercised so wide a beneficence as she does to-day, when her followers were so many, so courageous, and so united; when her influence upon the politics and literature of the nations was so commanding, we must ascribe it to the revival of foreign missions. That spirit of enterprise and unselfish love which is the direct inspiration of missions must be the animating genius of all Church work. The ascended Christ pervades by His Spirit everything that touches the mind of nations—the tides of public opinion, their ebb and flow, the changing bases of the religious sentiment, the circulation of literature, the strife and the issue of the battlefield, the revolutions of commerce, and the fate of governments. Christ is in all these movements. He appropriates every force, and uses it for the exaltation of God among the nations. The ultimate fate of the Christian religion is a subject of intense interest even to those who do not believe in its divinity. I refer to the thoughtful men who study the forces that are moving the world. These intellectual observers see in Christianity a tremendous power with a history behind it, and a prospect before it, which not only places it above the rivalry of other faiths, but leaves it absolutely alone as the one religion which educates the highest principles of humanity, and commands the civilization of the world. They assail its dogmas, they predict its fall; and yet are compelled to acknowledge that, in spite of the disunion which distracts its labours and weakens its federations, its march upon the convictions of mankind was never so swift, never so triumphant as it is to-day. The becoming attitude of those within the Church in their observation is stillness. Not the stillness of inactivity, nor the stillness of a sullen dis-

appointment, and still less the quiet of a settled despair. When God says, "Be still," He enforces the stillness of waiting—of watching the unfolding of ways and the development of thoughts which are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. But why should we be still? Because we know in part, and, therefore, prophesy—that is, utter Divine things—in part. We are ignorant of God's plan and God's method. But there are two things on which our ignorance may rest itself. First, the immutable declaration, "I will be exalted among the nations"; secondly, the proofs that this declaration is in process of fulfilment. Let us leave God to work out the realization of His designs in His own way. If the light of His operations is not clear to our understanding, if surrounding events appear to contradict our impression of His mind and character, can we expect any other result when passing finite beings are watching the steps of the Infinite? (*E. E. Jenkins, LL.D.*)

**Ver. 11. The Lord of Hosts is with us.—God with us:**—The Lord of Hosts—that means the God of power; the God who has all hosts of all sorts at His beck and under His control; the great King whom all created powers, whether marshalled in heaven or ranked on earth, somehow must obey. The Lord of Hosts is the God of Providence, therefore—the circle of whose wise government embraces the least and greatest persons, forces, things. The God of Jacob—that means the God of covenant-keeping; the God who promises, and never breaks His promises. And our Scripture asserts that He is with us, that He is our refuge. "We are thus reminded of the double prop on which our faith rests; the infinite power, whereby He can subdue the universe unto Himself; and the fatherly love, which He has revealed in His Word. When these two are joined together, our faith may trample on all enemies." **I. This God is with us AS AN INWARD INVIGORATION.** "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." No city was supplied with water as was Jerusalem within itself. For there was within Jerusalem a living spring beneath the temple vaults. It was this spring whence the water welled to fill the two Siloam pools. In this way this God of power and of promise will be with us, if we will have it so. Even as Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the fountain of living water within the believing man. God shall be, for such a man, internal supply and strength, making the man the master of difficulties, not the slave of them. Right here is the mightiest need for all of us—that we have God thus with us, in the meaning of within us, by the Holy Spirit. 1. It is the cure for cold and laggard hearts. 2. It is the inspiration of delightful and loving service. 3. It is the power and defence against bad habits. 4. It is the sweet expeller of all unbrotherliness. **II. This God of power and of promise will be with us also AS A HELPING PRESENCE.** "God is in the midst of her," etc. **III. This God of power and of promise shall be with us AS A MASTERFUL DELIVERANCE** (ver. 6). (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*)

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## PSALM XLVII.

**VERS. 1-9. O clap your hands, all ye people.—Messianic triumph predicted:**—The psalmist looked far ahead. His immediate experience was as "a little window through which he saw great matters." The prophecy of the universal spread of God's kingdom and the inclusion in it of the Gentiles is Messianic; and whether the singer knew that he spoke of a fair hope which should not be a fact for weary centuries, or anticipated wider and permanent results from that triumph which inspired his song, he spake of the Christ, and his strains are true prophecies of His dominion. There is no intentional reference in the psalm to the Ascension; but the thoughts underlying its picture of God's going up with a shout are the same which that Ascension sets forth as facts—the merciful coming down into humanity of the Divine Helper; the completeness of His victory as attested by His return thither where He was before; His session in heaven, not as idle nor wearied, but as having done what He meant to do; His continuous working as King in the world; and the widening recognition of His authority by loving hearts. The psalmist summons us all to swell with our voices that great chorus

of praise which, like a sea, rolls and breaks in music round His royal seat. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The praiseworthy and the faultworthy in worship*.—Man is a worshipper. The deepest craving of his soul is for worship, and in true worship alone he can find the healthy excitement and the full and felicitous development and exercise of all his powers. I. THE PRAISE-WORTHY IN WORSHIP. 1. Exultancy. "O clap your hands," etc.; "shout unto God." "Sing praises to God," etc. Among the reasons indicated in the psalm for this exultancy is His supremacy over all the earth. (1) His government of the world is founded upon the reason of things. (2) His government of the world is founded upon laws suited to the nature of His subjects. (3) His government of the world is exercised for purely benevolent ends. (4) His government of the world affords opportunities for rebels to be restored. 2. Enthusiasm. In worship all the faculties and susceptibilities of the soul are interested, and into it conscience pours its whole force. 3. Monotheism. There is one God, and one only, to be worshipped. The supremely good is to be loved supremely, the supremely great to be adored supremely, the supremely just to be obeyed supremely. 4. Intelligence. "Sing ye praises with understanding." Worship is not an unmeaning act, not a burst of blind passion; it is founded in the profoundest philosophy, it implies the grandest truths. II. THE FAULT-WORTHY IN WORSHIP. 1. There is something like selfishness here. Worship may begin in gratitude, may spring from a sense of God's personal kindness; but it only becomes virtuous and noble as it rises into self-oblivious adoration. 2. There is something like revenge here. "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." "God reigneth over the heathen." "The shields of the earth belong unto God"; i. e. the rulers of the earth are in His hand. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 4. **He shall choose our inheritance for us: the excellency of Jacob whom He loved.**—*He shall choose our inheritance for us.* How fond our children are, and the younger they are the more so, of saying, "I mean to be." And then each one tells what his or her choice is. A soldier, a farmer, a cottage girl, and so on. And we let them talk on.

"We know the world is hard and rough,  
But time will teach that soon enough."

Nevertheless, our path in life is chosen for us. We do not have our own way. There is sweet music in the words of our text. Livingstone, in his fever, far away from any tender hand or kindly care, in poison-haunted jungles of the African wilderness, borne in from day to day, his end seemingly very near, and left by his servants unconscious in his tent while they went to seek other aid; they found him when they came back on his knees by his bedside, but dead—so had he passed away and died in sight of his promised land. He had not received the promise, but he was satisfied, and crowned his life with a consecration of prayer. That was his way of saying, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." It is, if a funeral, not the less a triumphant song. Every life must be a triumph that passes out in prayer. Life's present discords will constitute its great harmony by and by. For—I. THE JOY OF LIFE IS TO FEEL THAT IT IS NOT A SCHEME OF FATALISM, a mere reign of law. "He shall choose our inheritance for us." This is a strange word to come from an Eastern psalmist, for such men were mainly fatalists, as they are to this day. But the Bible proclaims the freedom of man, and that the universe is governed, not by infinite chance, but by infinite choice. II. THE DIVINE CHOICE PROVES ITSELF BY DIVINE LOVE. "The excellency of Jacob whom He loved." Huxley tells us that man is justified by verification. But it is not only true that man is justified by faith, but God is also. Choice is another word for love. Love runs along the line of our lives, so that in the end God is justified by verification after all. Jacob was the proof of that love of His. God chooses for us, and His choice is love. Once upon a time in a family I know of there were four children, sons; their names were Little Faith, Don't-care, Honest Doubt, and Great-heart. One day their father called them to him and said, "Children, our family has a house called Beautiful, a great way off. I am going there now: you will attend to my estates down here, and you will follow me by and by; and to find your way take this map, study it—it shows you the way, follow its directions and follow me, and you shall safely arrive at the house Beautiful." Now, when the father was gone, the brothers began to talk over

and to dispute about the father's will. Don't-care said he was comfortable where he was; should take and stock a farm and lead a merry life; let them go after the house Beautiful who chose, he should not. Little Faith said he did not know how-over he should find the way. He could not understand maps. Honest Doubt said that, like Little Faith, he too was a bad hand at maps, and, though he knew father loved them, and his will was just, like him, yet he had so much doubt about the whole matter that, until he had more certainty, he could not believe. But Great-heart said, "Brothers, I mean to go; and, Little Faith and Honest Doubt, if you will go with me, any little help I can give you shall have. As to you, Don't-care, you always were a bad one. But, brothers, if the way seems doubtful, you know we can look on the map together, and you, Honest Doubt, will perhaps keep us from being deceived; and you, Little Faith, shall help to keep us prayerful and humble, so let us start and cheer each other." And they did so, and the last I heard of them was that on their way they were singing, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." And without fail those three brothers will reach the Beautiful Home. Then—III. THERE IS DIVINE CONSOLATION IN THESE WORDS. They are personal. For each one of us, be we who we may. (*E. Paxton Hood.*)

**Submission to Divine appointment:**—I. GOD HAS THE RIGHT OF SUPREME CONTROL. He is our Creator, Benefactor, Lawgiver, Preserver, Redeemer and Judge. II. HIS CHOICE IS THE RESULT OF ETERNAL WISDOM. We cannot descry the future, but God sees the end from the beginning. We are fallible, but God never errs. Things with us are often bounded by time; God always includes eternity. III. HE LOVES ALL HIS SINCERE FOLLOWERS. IV. IT PRESERVES US FROM TAKING AN IMPROPER COURSE. Quietness and confidence in God is our best preservative in the path of integrity. When Israel lost their confidence, they swerved. V. IT IS THE HAPPIEST STATE OF MIND ON EARTH. Take a few cases—Bereavement (Gen. xliii. 14); Affliction (Job i. 21); Uncertainty (Acts xxi. 13, 14); Death (2 Pet. i. 14). VI. HE WORKS ALL THINGS FOR HIS OWN GLORY. Improvements—1. Let the sinful wanderer adopt the sentiment, and from that day he will be blessed. 2. Let the Lord's own children learn to say, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." (*Evangelical Preacher.*)

**The providence of God:**—I. WHAT THE TEXT EXPRESSES. 1. A belief of the providence of God. This belief is supported by the strongest arguments: by what we daily see of the instincts and appetites of living creatures; by the gravitation of matter, or the tendency of all heavy bodies to the earth; by many wonderful events, that happen contrary to what might be expected from the appearances of things; the discovery of secret wickedness, etc. 2. Providence has a peculiar concern for good men, and is exercised towards them with special care, tenderness and love. 3. Hearty consent to God's determinations. Not only a belief that He will choose for His people, but an entire, cheerful acquiescence in His choice. This temper includes the important virtues of humility, patience and contentment. It includes a frame of spirit suited to a persuasion of an over-ruling providence. This persuasion is expressed and strengthened by daily, fervent prayer; and there is to be nothing in the actions or words contrary to it or inconsistent with it: no impatience, fretfulness, or discontent allowed; no unlawful methods used to mend our circumstances, or extricate us out of any difficulty. And if the rebel heart is disposed to murmur, it must be checked and restrained by resolution, watchfulness and prayer. II. A RECOMMENDATION TO CULTIVATE THIS TEMPER. 1. We are not able to choose for ourselves. Our knowledge is limited to a few objects, and we see those imperfectly. We cannot look into futurity, and have many false biases upon our judgment. We have often found ourselves mistaken, and been forced to acknowledge, that we have made a bad choice. "If God would study a close, quick and certain way of being revenged upon a man, He needs but open His stores and bid him choose for himself." 2. God is most fit to choose for us. For His understanding is infinite, His wisdom perfect, His judgment unerring. No case can possibly arise which will puzzle Him; nor can He have any bias upon His mind to act wrong. 3. God hath chosen well for us already, and therefore we should trust Him. This appears from the many favours He hath bestowed upon us, and the goodness and mercy that have followed us all our days. 4. Our minds can never be easy till we leave it to God to choose for us. God will have His choice, whether we leave it to Him or no (Isa. xlv. 10). III. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS. 1. Let us own God's choice in every agreeable circumstance of life. 2. Let us humbly acquiesce in whatever is disagreeable. 3. Let us never allow ourselves to be anxious about future events. In order to support a patient, composed,

cheerful spirit, let us live near to God by the daily exercise of fervent prayer; and especially pray that He would "fulfil in us the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power"; and help and cure the remainder of unbelief, which is the foundation of all our sorrows, fears and anxiety. (*Job Orton, D.D.*)

*Christian resignation*:—Nothing so destroys all the comfort of life as the spirit of discontent with the dispensations of Divine providence. It is as a curse at the root of every earthly good, and it is, at the same time, a barrier in the way of all improvement in religion. Therefore it is our duty to fortify our minds by these considerations, which will help to maintain within us the opposite disposition of a perpetual and unreserved submission to the will of God. We would speak, accordingly—I. OF THE NATURE OF THE GRACE OF RESIGNATION. 1. Our text is a profession of it, but its words are not to be applied to our state in the world to come. That inheritance is left to our own choice. God will help us, but it is not necessary that He should choose for us. For there are but two conditions in the future—not a multitude, which might distract: and they are of the most contrasted character. On the one side is all evil, and on the other all good, so that the decision is easy. The choice, therefore, is left to ourselves. 2. Nor can the text be applied to aught that essentially affects the decision of that state, but only to those things in which men may innocently differ from each other. It is only to those diversities which are strictly non-essential as to the decision of our everlasting destiny that any man is capable of being properly resigned. Such are the distinctions (1) of rank and property. (2) Of prosperity and adversity. (3) Personal affliction and sorrow. (4) Endowments of mind, means of improvement, opportunities of usefulness—with regard to all such things the Christian will say, The Lord "shall choose," etc. 3. But great virtues are often found to border on dangerous extremes: therefore we need to guard the definition of such virtues very carefully. (1) Therefore this grace of resignation is not to be confused with Stoicism. The effect of pure religion is not to convert flesh into stone, but stone into flesh. Its object is not to stupefy or destroy, but rather to refine and exalt the feelings of our nature. Job felt deeply his sorrows, but it is expressly said, "In all this he sinned not." And so with our Lord. (2) Nor does resignation prohibit our praying against any evil that is feared, or for good that may be desired. See Paul and his thorn in the flesh. (3) Nor does it necessitate that we are to sit still and do nothing to help ourselves. The text refers to Israel's possession of Canaan, but still they had to do much ere it became theirs. II. THE PROPRIETY AND ADVANTAGES OF THIS GRACE. (*J. Crouther.*) *God's conduct of our affairs*:—Allusion seems to be here made to the division of the earth among Noah's sons after the deluge (*Deut. xxxii. 7-9*). And like division by lot was observed in regard to the land of Canaan. Though the lot was cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof was of the Lord. And still God graciously interferes in our affairs. I. THE MANNER OF GOD'S CONTROL. 1. The constant interference on the part of God regards everything relative to our condition in this finite state of being. All form parts of the Divine choosing, however hard it may be to reconcile superior determination with the free and unrestrained choice which every individual makes for himself. This superintendence is as extensive as it is minute. He telleth the number of the stars, and He counteth the hairs of our head. In its operation it touches the springs of human determination, without at all infringing on individual liberty; and directs man to the choice, while man chooses for himself. 2. It includes the special regards which God pays to His own people. "This people have I formed for Myself," etc. 3. The Divine Spirit chooses our lot, by leading, directing, and regulating the choice we make for ourselves; not by a powerful and immediate control of the will, but by implanting those principles in the mind which, in their voluntary exercise, will form a choice agreeable to the Divine mind. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." II. THE PROPRIETY AND ADVANTAGE OF LEAVING THE CHOICE OF OUR INHERITANCE TO GOD. This is indeed nothing more than cheerfully recognizing the just exercise of His own prerogative: He will eventually do it, whether we will or not. But it is best voluntarily to leave it with God, because—1. It is infinitely wise and fit that He should choose our inheritance for us. To show the propriety of such a disposition, Jeremiah drew his followers to the potter's field (*Jer. xviii. 2-6*). 2. This arrangement is infinitely best for ourselves. The task of first forming a human soul for glory, and then bringing that soul to its possession, is what none but God Himself could accomplish. (*Robert Hall, A.M.*) *A wise desire*:—I. THE GLORIOUS FACT. As for the worldling, God gives him anything, but for the Christian, God selects the

best portion. He gives the worldlyng husks; but He stops to find out the sweet fruits for His people. I. And, first, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling Providence, and the appointment of Jehovah's hands, as to the means whereby we came into this world? What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect a certain person to be our parent? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God of Himself appoint our parents, native place and friends? And that we were born with healthy body and sound mind. If you have full possession of all your faculties and limbs, you must acknowledge and confess that there was the decree of God in it. And, still further, how much of the finger of God must we discern in our temper and constitution? I suppose no one will be foolish enough to say that we are all born with the same natural temperament and constitution. 2. I will ask any sensible man—above all, any serious Christian—whether there have not been certain times in his life when he could most distinctly see that indeed God did “choose his inheritance for him.” Look back and see how the hand of God was in your affairs, and by varied and often strange means allotting you your place and work. I can see a thousand chances, as men call them, all working together, like wheels in a great piece of machinery, to fix me just where I am. Verily, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Then look at the lives of the great saints told of in the Bible and see this truth plainly shown. Joseph; Moses; Daniel. And how many are the Bible declarations in the matter (Isa. xlv. 6, 7; Job xiv. 5; Prov. xvi. 33; Jer. xxi. 25). II. A PRAYER. “He shall choose our inheritance for us,” Dry doctrine is of little use. It is not the doctrine which helps us; it is our assent to the doctrine. But there are some of you who, if it were not the truth, would say you wish to have it so, for you would say in your prayer, “Thou shalt choose my inheritance for me.” 1. First, “Thou shalt choose my mercies for me.” And others would choose their employments; but it is far best to leave the choosing to God. “If there were two angels in heaven,” said a good man, “supposing there were two works to be done, and one work was to rule a city, and the other to sweep a street crossing—the angels would not stop a moment to say which they would do. They would do whichever God told them to do. Gabriel would shoulder his broom and sweep the crossing cheerfully; and Michael would not be a bit prouder in taking the sceptre to govern the city.” So with a Christian. But there is nothing that we oftener want to choose than our crosses. None of us like crosses at all; but all of us think everybody else's trials lighter than our own. Crosses we must have, but we often want to be choosing them. “Oh!” says one, “my trouble is in my family. It is the worst cross in the world—my business is successful; but if I might have a cross in my business, and get rid of this cross in my family, I should not mind.” (C. H. Spurgeon.)

**Ver. 5. God is gone up with a shout.—The solemnity of Christ's Ascension to the throne of glory:—**I. PROVE THE TRUTH OF THIS DOCTRINE—that Christ is gone up, or ascended. 1. This was typified under the Old Testament by the ark, which continued in a wandering, uncertain condition, as to the place of its abode, till it was taken up to Mount Zion and fixed in the holy of holies. 2. This was foretold by the prophet (Ps. cx. 1). 3. This is evident from the testimony of famous witnesses (Acts i. 11; vii. 55, 56). 4. This is confirmed from many texts of Scripture (Heb. i. 3; iv. 14; viii. 1; xii. 2). 5. This appears from the glorious fruits and consequences of His actual accession to the throne of glory, which have appeared in the open view of all mankind. II. SHOW WHAT IS IMPORTED IN THIS EXPRESSION OF HIS GOING UP. 1. His voluntary humiliation (John iii. 13). 2. His incarnation, or assumption of man's nature. 3. That He had ended or finished the work or service for which He came down into this lower world. 4. His resurrection from the dead, whereby He was justified as the Head and Surety of an elect world, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness. 5. That the gates of glory, which had been shut, were again opened by the death and satisfaction of Christ. 6. That God the Father is perfectly well pleased with the person and undertaking of our glorious Redeemer; for, if He had not been well pleased, how could He give Him such a solemn reception after His work was done? 7. That when Christ ascended, after finishing our redemption, He was received into heaven with the universal applause and admiration of the triumphant company. III. SPEAK OF THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION. 1. The place from whence He went up. This world, where He had met with such bad entertainment. 2. Whither He is gone up. He is gone up into the third heavens,

where no unclean thing can enter; and the heavens are to contain Him till the time of the restitution of all things. 3. To whom He is gone up (John xx. 17). Oh! what an infinite satisfaction would it be to Him to return to His Father, to be possessed of that glory that He had with Him before the world was! 4. Through what region, and through whose territories He went up. 5. His levee or retinue that attended Him when He went up. This seems to be pointed at (Ps. lxxviii. 17). 6. The spoils and trophies He carried along with Him when He went up. (1) The head of the old serpent. (2) The keys of the grave (Rev. i. 18). (3) The debt bond that we were owing to justico, retired and cancelled (Col. ii. 14). (4) The broken law repaired, yea, magnified and made honourable by His obedience unto death. (5) The keys of the house of David, i. e. an absolute dominion, sovereignty and headship over His Church, and over all creatures for the Church's sake (Isa. xxii. 22). 7. With respect to the solemnity of Christ's ascension, we may consider that He went up with a shout. Who were they that gave the shout? We read of nothing but a deep and silent gazing after Him as He went up from this lower world (Acts i. 9-11); where, then, was the shouting? In the Church triumphant, among an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: these sons of God shouted for joy when they saw their glorious Head of redemption and confirmation coming in personally among them. What kind of shouts were among that triumphant company when the Lord Jesus went up to His throne and kingdom? (1) A shout of approbation. (2) A shout of joy and gladness (Rev. xix. 7). (3) A shout of praise and gratitude (Rev. v. 9). (4) A shout of admiration and adoration among the triumphant company. (5) A shout of victory and triumph among the heavenly crowd. IV. **SHOW WHAT THERE IS IN THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST THAT AFFORDS SUCH GROUND OF TRIUMPH.** 1. God is gone up with a shout, as our forerunner, to open the way to glory, and to make a report of what was done in the days of His humiliation upon this earth (Heb. vi. 20). 2. He has gone up as a victorious general to receive a triumph after the battle. 3. He is gone up as a bridegroom to prepare a lodging for His bride, and to make suitable provision for her against the day of the consummation of the marriage (John xiv. 2, 3). 4. God is gone up with a shout in our nature, as "the great high priest of our profession" (Heb. iv. 14; ix. 12; x. 21, 22). 5. God is gone up in our nature as "our Advocate with the Father" (1 John ii. 1). 6. God is gone up as our exalted King. 7. He is gone up to Mount Zion above, as the great Shepherd, to look after His sheep that are wandering in the wilderness. 8. He is gone up as our glorious Representative to take possession of the inheritance of eternal life, until his fellow-heirs, all believers whom He represents, follow Him. V. **USES.** 1. Of information. (1) See hence that the ignominy of the Cross of Christ is fully wiped away. (2) See hence that none need to think themselves dishonoured by suffering the hardest things for His sake. (3) See hence how little reason believers have to be disquieted because of the confusions of this lower world; even though heaven and earth were mingling, and seas roaring. Why, God is gone up with a shout: He governs the world for the Church's sake, and therefore nothing can go wrong, "no weapon formed against Zion shall prosper." (4) See hence the parallel or similitude between Christ's ascension and His coming to judgment. 2. Of trials. (1) Have you received His Spirit? He is a holy Spirit, a praying Spirit, a Spirit of life and liberty, a public Spirit in a time of defection; when the house of Christ is turned into a den of thieves, the zeal of His house will eat you up. (2) Your hearts will be frequently mounting up on high after Him, as upon eagle's wings. 3. Of consolation. (1) Thou shalt follow Him ere long. (2) Thou shalt not want the gifts, graces and influences of the Spirit to bear you up, and to carry you through in the work and service that He has for you upon earth. (3) Here is comfort under all the glooms and frowns of men in the world for owning Christ, His cause, His kingdom, His truths, His ways and people. (4) Here is comfort against the fear of the "roaring lion, who goes about seeking whom he may devour." (5) Here is comfort; all the angels in heaven are upon thy side, believer, all the armies of heaven are ready to fight the quarrel of His Church. (6) Here is comfort; death is disarmed of its sting, and can do no hurt. Why, Christ carried the sting of death, and the armour of this king of terrors with Him when He went up with a shout. "I have the keys of hell and of death." (7) Here is comfort; thy life is well secured, believer. Why, it is hid in Him who is gone up with a shout (Col. iii. 3). (8) Here is comfort, that all providential dispensations in the world are working together for thy good. 4. Of exhorta-

tion. (1) Behold Him with the eye of faith upon the throne. (2) Lift up the everlasting doors of your hearts, that this King of glory may come in. (3) Come with boldness unto the throne of grace. (4) Let all the world, angels, men and devils, reverence Him and do Him homage. (5) See that you have a due regard to the laws and liberties of His house, and the interests of His glory and kingdom. (6) Is He gone up with a shout? Then let us never be ashamed of Him before men, for He is our credit and ornament; He is not ashamed to confess us before His Father, and before His angels. (7) Let us join in the solemnity of His exaltation, for it is not yet ended. They that shouted when He went first up to heaven from Mount Olivet are shouting for joy to this day, and therefore let us join in the concert. (*E. Brakine.*)

Ver. 7. **God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.**—*Worship-song*.—Hymns help to nobler worship of God and clearer visions of His face. I. **BECAUSE THEY EMBODY THE HOLY THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF INSPIRING AND SEEING MEN AND WOMEN.** Many of the greatest hymns are the lyric expression of great experiences produced by some exceptional circumstances of the life. Cowper, by his coachman missing the way, was hindered from carrying out a plan of self-destruction which, in a season of great depression, he had formed. On his recovery he wrote the well-known hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way"; and many more such illustrations might be given. II. **THEY EXPRESS GREAT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.** The most deeply religious parts of the Old Testament are its poetic books. Hymns are more moving than devotional manuals, and their rhythm makes them cling to the memory. III. **THEY HAVE NEW POWER THROUGH THE MUSIC TO WHICH THEY ARE WEDDED, and—IV. THEY ARE THE NOBLEST VEHICLE FOR UNITED WORSHIP.** (*T. Garrett Horder.*)

Ver. 9. **The shields of the earth belong unto God.—God's shields:**—"The shields of the earth," all veritable protectives, are the property of God, and are of His creation. But why do I require a shield? What are my perils and foes? The fire of passion. The sharp gnawing tooth of care. The dull, heavy pressure of monotony. The burden of apparently unrequited toil. The slug of sloth. The moth of indifference. The rust of contempt. The awful weight of accumulating years. If I am to be protected against these perils I require varieties of shields, and "the shields of the earth belong unto God." He has shields for every type of peril; there is no unprotected corner which has been overlooked by our Lord. Our perils change their guise with our changing seasons, and the gradient of our age. In youth we frequently find our antagonism in "the lust of the flesh." Against this all-consuming passion we require a shield! In our prime "the lust of the flesh" changes into "the lust of the eyes," and perhaps matures into "the pride of life." Passion is converted into acquisitiveness, and acquisitiveness refines itself into vanity. If we are to resist these fatal fascinations we require a shield! In age we are imperilled by our disillusionments. The unaccomplished purpose becomes a snare. The radiant ideal seems no nearer achievement, and our poor attainments look upon us with confounding mockery. Then are we prone to become sour and crabbed, and life may pass into an impoverishing loneliness. If we are to be guarded against these perils we need a shield! And right through our life, from early youth to extreme old age, our course lies through perils of over-changing variety. With these environments of continuous danger, what shall we do? We must seek for an adequate shield, and "the shields of the earth belong unto God." Let us look at two or three of them. I. **THE SHIELD OF GOOD SPIRITS.** We often say of a man, "His good spirits were his salvation." There was a certain cheery radiance of spirit about his life. He was possessed by unfailing cheer and geniality. He saw everything through his own warmth. His warmth was his shield, and by it he was delivered from a thousand snares. Where did he get his warmth? "The shields of the earth belong unto God." I have often known men who have been passing through a November season of life in which other people have found nothing but coldness and gloom, but their life has been so possessed by the spirit of geniality, that the bird-song had never seemed to be silent, and the atmosphere was always redolent of the spring. Charles Kingsley passed through many a November season; trials and persecutions were not absent from his day, and yet his good spirits were always abounding, and by his good spirits the gloom was always illumined. Where do these people get their good spirits? They get them from the Lord. Just outside Buda Pesth



there is now a spring of continuous hot water, which is practically supplying the needs of an entire population. Boring has been continued to the depth of five thousand feet, and the genial spring has been unloosed. Is not this parabolic? If we want the genial springs, we must go to the requisite depths; we must not be surface characters, or our waters will be chilled in the first day of a cold November. We must bore deep. We must reach as far as God, and when we come into communion with Him, His water shall be in us a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." II. **THE SHIELD OF HOLINESS.** The pure allures the pure and resists the impure. But the life must be scrupulously pure! It must be healthy. Our imperfect consecrations are our perils; they are like ridged and wrinkled surfaces in which uncleanness easily hides. Holiness will not take stains. Lay your unclean finger upon soft and unfinished porcelain, and it will take the impress of your defiling touch. But lay your finger upon the shining, finished, perfected ware, and the substance will not take the stain. The virus which is inoculated for the prevention of small-pox frequently "does not take"; the body is so healthy that it affords no foothold for the invader! And surely that is what we need in the spirit! We require a spirit so healthy that evil suggestions will not "take." "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." That is the shield we require! How can we get it? We shall have to get away unto the Lord, and in deep humility of spirit pray that He will communicate unto us His own saving health. III. **THE SHIELD OF FAITH.** "The shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one." What are the perils? "Darts"—sharp, sudden, fierce experiences; "fiery darts"—sharp experiences that come to us in heat; "fiery darts of the evil one"—sharp experiences in the nature of sinful temptations that come to us in the feverish moments of our life. They are provocatives to temper, impatience, rashness, and sinful pique. What do we need as our protective? "The shield of faith." Faith gives quietness. "Let not your heart be troubled, believe!" Where belief is settled, the heart is delivered from distraction, and remains in fruitful peace. Faith gives collectedness. Our powers are no longer a turbulent mob, but a deliberative assembly. A man is not "all sixes and sevens," he is a living unit, all his powers co-operating in gracious harmony. This is the shield we require. Where can we get it? We must go to the Lord our Saviour, and in simplicity of spirit we must urge upon Him the prayer of the disciples of old, "Lord, increase our faith." (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *The law of protection:*—The text has a special appropriateness for troublous times, and in troublous times the Church has often remembered and verified it. When threatened and terrified, hunted and harried, made the victim of earthly tyranny, the object of earthly assaults, the Church has discovered that just where the earthly danger was, there also was the earthly shield—raised up, brought near, and made available by Him who is the Sovereign of the earth, for the assistance of His cause and the safe-keeping of His people. I. **THE SHIELD POLITICAL IS IN THE HAND OF GOD.** We refer to the protecting influence of good government. What an unspeakable, yet often forgotten, blessing is the blessing of a civilized and enlightened constitution, considered simply as a shield! It is the principle and the pride of good government like our own that it aims at the throwing of its protecting screen over strong and weak, rich and poor alike, seeking to deal open and even-handed justice to all, without favour and without fear. Well, the shield political is in the hand of God. It is He who appoints it, maintains it, and directs it as need arises or danger demands. What is the practical lesson? For one thing, let there be recognition of God's power and gratitude for God's goodness in extending such a shield, so near, so ample, so strong; thus setting our lines in pleasant places, and appointing us a godly heritage. Let there be prayer for God's blessing, that those who compose that shield, the living minds that plan, the living hands that execute, may lend themselves more and more to the influence of a Christian spirit and the accomplishment of Christian ends. II. **THE SHIELD DOMESTIC IS IN THE HAND OF GOD.** We refer to the protective influence of a pious home. Home is home, indeed, only when it surrounds the growing boy or girl with a whole investiture of pure and affectionate influences—kind deeds, kind words, kind thoughts—and thus forms a quiet pavilion, where the young life can feel itself safe. Let parents grudge no pains, spare no expedients, that tend to the maintenance of this feeling, and the drawing and the keeping of their children together under the shadow of that safeguard which we call home. And let all, whether parents or children, remember that, like other shields, the shield of a happy Christian home is in the hand of God. It

is God who erects it. It is God who keeps it together. Therefore, in all that pertains to our home, let God have the guidance, and let God have the glory.

III. SHIELDS SOCIAL ARE IN THE HANDS OF GOD. Here we pass to another protective influence of life, and note the preserving power of helpful and beneficent institutions. We live in an age of organizations. They are with us upon every hand—organizations philanthropic, moral, religious. We have our societies for the promotion of health, the diffusion of literature, the increase of temperance, the preservation of purity. And all these are shields, or are meant to be shields, for the young, the innocent, the feeble, the tempted, and the penitent. The point we should always notice is this, that they are shields in the hand of God. The fact is suggestive of two things we do well to keep constantly in mind.

1. Such safeguards owe their origin to Divine revelation. Philanthropy springs from the plains of Galilee, where the Saviour fed the hungry and healed the ailments of the multitude.

2. They owe their efficiency to Divine grace. A white cross will not keep a man pure; again, it is only a symbol and expression: what will save and preserve him is the same grace of God.

IV. SHIELDS PHYSICAL ARE IN THE HANDS OF GOD. Among the protecting influences of life there is the influence of the powers and processes of natural law. Think of these influences in their broadest and most general sense as a protection and a benefit to the race at large. How wonderfully force balances force, and principle supplements or checks principle!—the great and grand resultant being the safety and stability of the natural order we belong to, and the safety and stability of ourselves in the midst of it. Let us believe in a Providence that keeps the feet of the saints, and, if necessary for the keeping of them, can make nature itself a minister of grace. A friend writes thus in a letter: "Did I tell you of my escape from drowning last year in Derwentwater, after my return from Brittany? My canoe upset. But angels that remove some stones out of the way can place other stones in it when needful. So was I preserved!"

V. SHIELDS SPIRITUAL ARE IN THE HANDS OF GOD. Let us select, as our last illustration, the protection afforded by the prayers and the presence of the saints. It is a fruitful and inspiring thought! For as the supplications of the saints go up, from the public assembly, from the household hearth, from the solitude and secrecy of private chambers and private hearts, for a race beset by sorrow and defiled by sin, they interpose a real and a solid barrier between those interceded for and the dangers that surround. The world owes more to them than it knows. Why is anger restrained? Why is chastisement delayed? Often for the saints' sake. May He in whose hand are the shields of the earth continue this shield, the shield of earnest and faithful intercession, till those that are sheltered beneath its shadow make their peace with Himself, and become intercessors in their turn! (W. A. Gray.)

#### PSALM XLVIII.

VERS. 1-14. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.—*A song of deliverance*:—The psalm has manifestly some historical basis. What is it? The psalm gives these points—a formidable muster before Jerusalem of hostile people under confederate kings with the purpose of laying siege to the city—some mysterious check which arrests them before a sword is drawn, as if some panic fear had shot from its towers and shaken their hearts—and a flight in wild confusion from the impregnable dwelling-place of the Lord of hosts. Now, there is only one event in Jewish history which corresponds, point for point, to these details—the crushing destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib. The psalm falls into three portions. I. THERE IS THE GLORY OF ZION (vers. 1, 2). These words are something more than merely patriotic feeling. The Jew's glory in Jerusalem was a different thing altogether from the Roman's pride in Rome. For, to the devout Jew, there was one thing, and one thing only, that made Zion glorious—that in it God abode. The name even of that earthly Zion was "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there." They celebrate concerning it that it is His city, the mountain of His holiness. This is its glory. And it is no spiritualizing or forcing a New Testament meaning into these words when we see in them the eternal truth, that the

living God abides, and energizes by His Spirit and by His Son in the souls of them that believe upon Him. It is that presence which makes His Church fair as it is, that presence which keeps her safe. It is God in her, not anything of her own, that constitutes her "the joy of the whole earth." II. THE DELIVERANCE OF ZION. The psalm recounts with wonderful power and vigour the process of this deliverance (vers. 4-8). Mark the dramatic vigour of the description of the deliverance. There is, first, the mustering of the armies. "The kings were assembled"—we see them gathering their far-reaching and motley army, mustered from all corners of that gigantic empire. They advance together against the rocky fortress that towers above its girdling valleys. "They saw it, they marvelled"—in wonder, perhaps, at its beauty, as they first catch sight of its glittering whiteness from some hill crest on their march—or, perhaps, stricken by some strange amazement, as if, basilisk-like, its beauty were deadly, and a beam from the Shechinah had shot a nameless awe into their souls—"they were troubled, they hasted away." The abruptness of the language in this powerful description reminds us of the well-known words, "I came, I saw, I conquered," only that here we have to do with swift defeat—they came, they saw, they were conquered. In their scornful emphasis of triumph they are like Isaiah's description of the end of Sennacherib's invasion, "So Sennacherib, King of Assyria, departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh."

"The trumpet spake not the armed throng,  
But kings sat still, with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by."

One image is all that is given to explain the whole process of the deliverance, "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." The metaphor is that of a ship like a great unwieldy galleon caught in a tempest—compare the destruction of the Spanish Armada. However strong for fight, it is not fit for sailing. And so this huge assailant of Israel, this great "galley with oars," washing about there in the trough of the sea, as it were—God broke it in two with the tempest which is His breath. You remember how on the medal that commemorated the destruction of the Spanish Armada—our English deliverance—there were written the words of Scripture: "God blew upon them and they were scattered." What was there true, literally, is here true in figure. And then mark how from this drastic description there rises a loftier thought still. The deliverance thus described links the present with the past. "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God." And with all the future—"God will establish it for ever." God will establish Zion; or, as the word might be translated, God will hold it erect, as if with a strong hand grasping some pole or banner-staff that else would totter and fall—He will keep it up, standing there firm and steadfast. If it had been possible to destroy the Church of the living God it had been gone long, long ago. Its own weakness and sin, the ever-new corruptions of its belief and paring of its creed, the imperfections of its life and the worldliness of its heart, the abounding evils that lie around it and the actual hostility of many that look upon it and say, Raze it, even to the ground, would have smitten it to the dust long since. It lives, it has lived in spite of all, and therefore it shall live. "God will establish it for ever." In almost every land there is some fortress or other which the pride of the inhabitants calls "the maiden fortress," and whereof the legend is that it has never been taken, and is inexpugnable by any foe. It is true about the tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion. The grand words of Isaiah about this very Assyrian invader are our answer to all fears within and foes without, "Say unto him, the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn." III. ZION'S CONSEQUENT GRATEFUL PRAISE AND GLAD TRUST. The deliverance deepens their glad meditation on God's favour and defence. "We have thought of Thy lovingkindness in the midst of Thy temple." And it spreads God's fame throughout the world (ver. 10). (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.—*Spiritual nationality*:—I. A REHEARSAL OF JEWISH HISTORY. This is necessary in order to understand the inner meaning of this psalm. Israel's history begins with Abraham. His life nomadic, wandering, a wilderness life. And so with Israel for centuries it was a forced desert experience. II. THE DIVINE PHILOSOPHY OF IT.

It was to make up the longing for rest, for a settled habitation and a national life. They had learned enough to know that cities enable men to unite, to concentrate for great material purposes. Cities not only symbolized but secured possession, fixity, safety, growth, nationality. Hence their joy in Jerusalem of which this psalm is an utterance. III. AND TO ALL THIS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CORRESPONDS. God's call separates, but ultimately unites. Let us anticipate our future in "the city of habitation." (*J. McDougall.*) *The charm of Zion* (with Ps. l. 2) :—There is comfort for us in the thought that Zion's beauty was spiritual; there is also warning. Wanting spiritual power, certain churches would have something left, a remaining charm. Their architectural monuments, their imposing ceremonies would still command a measure of deference and support. But wanting spiritual power, we are destitute indeed. Our Churches consist of persons who have made deliberate profession of faith in Christ; faith whereby they enter into spiritual union with Him. He is their Head, they are His members. I. Charm in our church life must therefore ever be dependent, first, upon the actualizing of this relation, by REAL COMMUNION WITH CHRIST. The unreal has no charm for God, and He purposes that it should have none for man. The Bible makes this clear, and experience echoes Bible teaching. Real communion with Christ is not sentiment. It is the surrender and reinforcement of the will. It is obedience, love, self-sacrifice supernaturally sustained. It is sharing the spirit and life of Jesus. II. Another essential to charm in the Church is SYMPATHY. The New Testament incites to brotherly love, bearing one another's burdens, looking on the things of others, and such like. In the first age, before the art of sublimating precepts into metaphors was discovered, these incitements found response; love was patent, sympathy flowed freely. The stream of sympathy flows still, but its course is often blocked by boulder-like conventionalities; and, where communion with Christ is defective, it fails at the spring. The social meeting, not unknown among us, merits study and development: the meeting in which our members get to know one another, discover that Christian fellowship is compatible with social friendship, and find opportunity for quiet natural speech upon the things of God. III. This brings me to another matter which must contribute charm to our Church life, namely, THE DISCLOSURE OF JOY IN GOD. Our recoil from cant has silenced the sincere. Yet, doubtless, every Christian should reveal, in look and word, the wealth of joy he has discovered in the Gospel. Of course, it is "bad form" to be demonstrative; to advertise one's emotions. It may be. But the stony immobility that never calls attention with enthusiasm to marvels of nature or miracles of grace is insulting to God; a fraudulent withholding of His due praise. IV. Something should be added about AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITY. If the Church is to maintain and increase her charm she must make it clear that she holds no truce with the giant wrongs under which men suffer. In warring against these the Church has done, and is doing, nobly. We claim, too, that she has supplied inspiration for humanitarian enterprise effected under other auspices. When our best men take their seats in Town Council, the Church is present in their persons, and is a good councillor. Yet her watchword must be "Forward." The dullest scorners must be left without excuse for echoing the stupid libel that our churches are Pullman cars for heaven, the passengers caring only for their travelling comforts and safe arrival. (*G. Hawker.*) *The beauty of Christ's Church*:—The situation (of Mount Zion) is, indeed, eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel. Rising high above the deep Valley of Gihon and Hinnom on the West and South, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the East, it could only be assailed from the North-west; and then "on the side of the North" it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations. Alas her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to the dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following. There is another Zion, however, whose towers are still more glorious and shall never be overthrown. (*W. M. Thomson, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.—*The secret of national greatness*:—It is not the nation makes the people, but the people make the nation. On the rulers depends the nation's prosperity. When God is honoured in the palace He will be worshipped in the cottage. When Atheists make laws, sedition will be the offspring. I. INFLUENCE ALWAYS DESCENDS. It is like the rain and dew. The less follow the great. Great power, great wealth, great minds always

lead. II. **THE GREAT AFFECT THE GREAT.** The kings of the earth saw and were troubled. Palace religion is more displayed than that of the cottage. God has His own work for the insignificant, but the great have also their higher sphere. III. **NATIONAL RELIGION IS NATIONAL PRESERVATION.** The kings hasted away. Their hostility was vain in the presence of Him who was the Refuge of the palace. (*Homilist.*) *God known as a refuge.*—Even false worship argues a constitutional capacity for the true. I. **THE CONCEPTION OF GOD IS THE GREATEST THING IN MAN.** In proportion as it is lost or distorted, human dignity decays, and the race sinks nearer the level of inferior creatures. The mould on which he was made is the cause of man's original greatness; but when he ceases to lay himself habitually back upon his origin, his being shrinks down again into the dimensions of a lower species. II. **GOD IS.** This is the first proposition in the inspired confession of faith (Heb. xi. 6). An atheist may reason against the existence of God, and a worldly man may keep God out of all his thoughts, but neither the one nor the other can blot God out of being. Although we practically banish God out of our little spot of time, He will meet us when we enter His great eternity. III. **GOD IS KNOWN.** Observe Paul's method in reasoning with the Athenians regarding the altar which they had dedicated to the unknown God, and the cognate argument which he addressed to the idolaters at Lystra (Acts xiv. 15-17; xvii. 22-29). This is an inspired recognition of natural religion. The revelation which has been imprinted on earth and sky does not go far enough for the necessities of the fallen; but it is true as far as it goes. Men ought both to perceive its meaning and trust in its truth. IV. **GOD IS KNOWN IN HER.** "God is known," may be taken as the motto of natural, "God is known in her," as the motto of revealed religion. Wherever Christ is admitted King into a believing heart, there are the thrones of the house of David, there the temple stands, and thence sweet incense rises morning and evening to Heaven. Wherever many such believers are congregated, there is the city of the great King; wherever there are believing men and women, there is a peopled Jerusalem; and of that city it is the distinction still that God is known in her. V. **GOD IS KNOWN IN HER PALACES.** The psalm commemorates a revival in high places (2 Chron. xvii.-xx.). When grace was poured into the heart of the king, all ranks felt the benefit. The human skull, where the material organ of thought resides, has been called the palace of the soul. The princely spirit that dwells beneath that stately dome counts and keeps the whole world its tributary. In a princely way this king of the creatures has caught and tamed the powers of nature, and yoked them to his chariot. At the door of that regal residence a Stranger stands and knocks. Hear His voice, "If any man open, I will come in." This is God our Saviour. When He is admitted, God will be known in that palace; for, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Not Christ in heaven, but Christ in you, is the hope of glory. VI. **GOD IS KNOWN IN HER PALACES FOR A REFUGE.** The idea, the existence, the knowledge of God, whether among rich or poor, become for us all or nothing, according as we recognize Him as our refuge, or fear Him as our foe. For poor, blind, guilty, dying creatures, such as we are, there are only two ways open—we must either flee from God, or flee to Him. To those no good can happen, to these no evil. One thing is needful; and this is the meaning of a Gospel ministry, "Be ye reconciled to God." Make Him your refuge, and you will find the way is open, the welcome prepared; all things will work together for your good. (*W. Arnot.*)

Vers. 8-14. **As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God.**—"As we have heard, so have we seen."—This is seldom true. In many places we see what we have not heard, and what we have heard we do not see. But when you come into "the city of the Lord of hosts," the reports about it are true, and the truth exceeds the report. I. **IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE LISTEN TO TRUE WITNESSES;** for, else, we shall not be able to say, "As we have heard, so have we seen." It is of the first importance to you all that you should hear the Word of God, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus; so that, both in the throng of life, and when you stand upon the borders of death, and in the changeless state of eternity, you may be able to say, "We thank God for the Gospel which we heard; for what we heard with our ears has been verified in our lives." II. **GOOD HEARING LEADS ON TO SEEING.**—"As we have heard, so have we seen." Some of you have heard, and heard, but have never yet seen. The man who is content with one inlet to his mind, namely, his ears, but never uses his eyes, must imagine that God has made a mistake, and has given him more

senses than he needs. Surely this argues a want of sense. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." You will ask how can a hearer of the Gospel become a seer of it? 1. He can do this by examining the facts which he hears stated, and judging whether they are really so. The Scripture tells you that your heart is deceitful—see whether it be not so. It tells you that there is a natural inclination in man towards evil—study yourself, and see whether this is not the case. 2. We further see what we hear when we obey the commands and receive the blessings promised upon obedience. "If we confess our sins," etc. "Come unto Me," etc. 3. We also turn hearing into sight when, receiving the blessings which are promised to faith, we enter into a new life. III. SEEING WONDERFULLY CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF WHAT WE HEAR. I am sure I can appeal to those of you who have seen the Lord in His glory, so as to abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, and to those of you who have seen yourselves, so that you have been ashamed and confounded at your own ways. I say, I can appeal to you to confirm the most solemn statements of Holy Scripture. However much its denunciations may make you shudder, your inmost soul consents to the truth of them. Brighter things, however, have we heard and seen. We heard that there is a calling of God, whereby He separates His chosen from the rest of mankind. We heard, too, that if we came to Jesus as we were, He would receive us; and He did receive us. Then we heard that there was such a thing as regeneration. "Ye must be born again." Many of you know the great and radical change, because you have experienced it. Further, to show you how experience supports the Word of God, we were told many times over that God hears prayer. We were reminded of the Saviour's words, "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc. Have you not prayed yourselves out of the dark into the sunlight; prayed yourselves out of the depths of despair up to the throne of God? IV. WHEN HEARING TURNS TO SEEING, AND IS CONFIRMED BY IT, THEN IT LEADS TO WITNESSING. So many are decrying the truth, that, if in your heart and conscience you have proved it true, you are bound to give to the Lord the testimony of even a stammerer. Your mouth is as God made it: use it as best you can, and speak up for His name and cause. Oh, for more of the missionary spirit, more telling out to the ends of the earth of what the Lord has done! What were the stars, if they did not shine? What were the sun, if He did not make our day? What were the rivers, if they did not water the lands? What were the sea itself, if it did not act as the pulsing heart of the world? What are Christians, if they do not shine as lights? Piety bottled up is dead. Religion put into a tin and hermetically sealed is useless. V. HEARING, SEEING, WITNESSING, GOD WILL GIVE YOU A YET FULLER ASSURANCE THAN YOU HAVE AS YET. "God will establish it for ever." That is the conclusion which the saint comes to, when he has tried the truth for himself, and borne witness to the result of his trial. God will never leave His Church. God will never forfeit His word. God will never desert His Gospel. His honour is bound up in the whole enterprise that Christ undertook, He must go through with it, and He must arrive at a glorious conclusion. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "As we have heard, so have we seen":—The psalmist not only rejoices because of deliverance, but because that deliverance has proved that the commonplace present is as full of God as was the miraculous past, and has turned tradition into experience. The miracles of the Exodus have been repeated before the eyes of the psalmist's generation. "As we have heard, so have we seen," etc. And because the present has been the repetition of the past, the future shall be the continuation of the present. "God will establish it for ever." I. THE PLEDGE OF SECURITY IN THE NAME OF THE CITY. "The city of the Lord of hosts"—what does that great name for God mean? It means, I take it, very much the same thing as Jesus Christ praised the Roman centurion for having groped his way to discover; that all the universe is like an embattled legion, subject to the command of one authoritative Imperator, or Emperor, the Lord of hosts. Well, then, if the city is His, who is going to take it? What about Sennacherib? He may muster his hosts as he likes, but "in the morning they were all dead corpses," and Sennacherib went away back to Assyria to pray to his god. Much he made of that; for whilst he was praying his sons cut his throat; and that was the end of the worship that is given to "the hosts," and not to the Lord of "the hosts." But that is not all. The city is "the city of our God." He is Lord of the hosts, but there is a relation more tender and blessed between us and Him than there is between them and Him, for he is "Our God." And how does He come to be our God? By what He has done, and by what we have done. The relation is reciprocal; His side of it is His taking us for His and telling us that

He has done so; our side of it is our taking Him for ours by faith, love and obedience, and by our hearts' speech saying to Him, "Thou art my God." Then we may rest secure, if "the Lord of hosts is with us," etc. II. **HOW ALL THE WONDERS OF THE PAST ARE REPEATED TO-DAY.** That sounds paradoxical. "The age of miracles is past," say many sad hearts. We do not "see" as "we have heard," and we sometimes begin to doubt whether we have heard aright, just because we do not see what has been told us. Well, for all that, the triumphant word of my text is true to-day, as true as it was in regard to those who saw the miracle of the dead Assyrian hosts. My life is as full of God, if I like to make it so, as ever was the life of any patriarch or prophet or apostle of them all. Earth is as much crammed with God as it used to be. Not only is the reality of this working the same, but I venture to say the manner in which He now does His great things for us is an advance on the manner in which He did them of old. It is better to have a Christ in the heart than a Christ working miracles beside us; better to be guided by the Divine Spirit that dwells in us than by the pillar of fire and cloud. It is better to be committed to the responsibility of our own judgments, and our own purified hearts, than it is to hear a voice from heaven saying to us in articulate syllables what we ought to do. And they who are, or, if they will, may be, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," do not need to envy those of old to whose palsied limbs the hands of the Saviour gave power, or to whose blind eyes he gave sight. III. **THE CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE WHICH SPRINGS FROM EXPERIENCE.** It is always safe to reckon on God's future, and to infer what it will be, from God's past. You cannot do that with men, you can do it with Him; because He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We get tired of helping people, and say, "I have done it so often that I really cannot do it any more." God says, "I have done it so often that I will not cease doing it." Men's purposes change; His do not. Men's resources get exhausted; His never. If we are trusting to Him we can boldly say, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." It is always safe to reckon on God's future being of a piece with God's past. Therefore, the city and the citizens, each one of whom has a personal relation to God, must live for ever, in order that they may possess all that God can give them. That is a plain way of putting what can be put in more graceful language, by saying that the experience of communion with God here is the best proof, to any of us, of immortal life hereafter. Because God has given us what He has given, and been to us what He has been, and done for us what He has done, it is impossible to believe that there can come an end to the relation between Him and us, and that the man who has clasped God's hand can ever die. "He shall establish it for ever." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Testimony confirmed by experience*:—1. The Church, like a parent of a family, gives a volume into the hands of those who join her communion, bidding them receive it as Divine, and study it as the word which can alone guide them to glory. And her members, like the children of the household, have no better reason, at first, for receiving the Bible as inspired, than because they have heard so in the city of the Lord. They yield so much of respect to the directions of their authorized teachers, or to the impressions which have been graven on them from infancy, as to give their homage to a volume which is presumed to bear so lofty a character. But then, though it may thus be on hearsay that they first receive the Bible as inspired, it is not on hearsay that they continue to receive it. We speak of those in whom the Word has "wrought effectually"; and we confidently affirm of them, that, though at one time they believed in the inspiration of the canonical Scriptures, because their parents taught it, or their ministers maintained it, yet now are they in possession of a personal experimental evidence, which is thoroughly conclusive on this fundamental point. 2. But there is yet a more obvious application of the words of our text. It is said of God by Solomon that He "requireth that which is past." He seeks again that which is past, recalling, as it were, the proceedings, whether in judgment or mercy, of departed ages, and repeating them to the present generation. And it is on this account that there is such value in the registered experience of the believers of other days, so that the biography of the righteous is among the best treasures possessed by a church. It is, in one sense at least, a vast advantage to us that we live late in the world. We have all the benefit of the spiritual experience of many centuries, which has been bequeathed to us as a legacy of more worth than large wealth or far-spreading empire. We have not, therefore, to tread a path in which we have had but few precursors. Far as the eye can reach, the road we have to traverse is crowded with beckoning forms, as

though the sepulchres gave up their host of worthies that we might be animated by the view of the victorious throng. And this is an advantage which it is hardly possible to overrate. You have only to add to this an acquaintance with the unchangeableness of God, and there seems all that can be needed to the encouragement and confidence of the righteous. 8. If there be one passage of Scripture which we venture to put into the lips of redeemed men in glory, it is our text; in this instance we may be confident that the change from earth to heaven will not have made the language of the one unsuited to the other. Ob, as the shining company take the circuit of the celestial city; as they "walk about Zion, and go round about her," telling the towers thereof, marking well her bulwarks, and considering her palaces; who can doubt that they say one to another, "as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God"? We heard that here "the wicked cease from troubling," and now we behold the deep rich calm. We heard that here we should be with the Lord, and now we see Him face to face. We heard that here we should know, and now the ample page of universal truth is open to our inspection. We heard that here, with the crown on the head, and the harp in the hand, we should execute the will and hymn the praises of our God, and now we wear the diadem, and wake the melody. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

**Ver. 9. We have thought of Thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple.**—*Thought—its highest theme and material aid*:—Three points stand out distinctly in the text, all of which are closely connected. I. **THE MENTAL ART IS THOUGHT.** "We have thought." It is you that think, not your body. But all mental acts are not thought. Memory, consciousness, sensations, emotions, are not thought, though they may be productive of it. Thought is judgment. We think when we analyze, compare, classify. Now, this faculty has certain properties, as—1. Power; for it is the mightiest of all forces. The entire universe is the outcome of the thought of God. 2. Pleasantness, which rises at times to ecstasy. Pleasure is connected with the use of all our faculties, and not least with this of thought. 3. Universality. All can think. This is a thinking age, but it can never get beyond Jesus Christ, for He is the wisdom of God and the light of the world. II. **THE THEME OF THOUGHT**—God's lovingkindness. Yes, perhaps, some of you say, a noble and inspiring subject of thought, truly. But is there not a prior question? Is it a fact that God exists and that He loves? We live in a perplexing world, and strange and bold theories are afloat. How shall we know that God is, and that He loves? Begin with the fact nearest you, and which you do not and cannot question—your own personal existence. Each of you can say, "I am." Equally certain is it you did not make yourself. You come from a source adequate to such a result, and that source we call God, by which word we mean one equal to such a workmanship as you are. And now, admitting you had a Creator, what is there in you that indicates His heart towards you? What is there that shows love? Look at yourself fairly, beginning with your body, and take part after part. Your eye; what would you have lost if born blind, and what have you gained by seeing? Your ear; what do you owe for that? Your hands; what have they done for you? Is speech worth having? Any benevolent meaning in putting your palate at the entrance of food into your body?—in protecting the drum of the ear?—in giving you a curtain for the eye?—in covering the brain with a helmet of bone? Work without sleep would bring on madness, and at night the curtain is drawn, and you get your needed rest. What as to yourself, viewed as distinct from this wonderful framework? You have consciousness, sensation, memory, judgment. Can any calculation adequately convey to you the value of these endowments? You have, moreover, a moral sense, a heart, a will. And for these moral capabilities and cravings there is an abundant response in the hearts around you, and the proofs of a supreme moral Ruler—proofs which remain such, whatever your disposition towards them, and your ignoring of their voice. Having studied this personal Bible—yourself, extend the same thoughts to your nearest of kin, your household, your neighbourhood, your nation, your race—think of mankind in all generations. Add to these data all other living beings that do and have existed from the beginning as far as your imagination can give them room, and then ask, Did all the good and enjoyment embraced within this whole come out of indifference, malevolence or love? III. **MATERIAL AID.** We do not need the particular help which the ancient Jews had; but we can no more dispense with material appliances in our religious services than we can cease here to be clothed with flesh and be denizens of a material globe. We have God's own



original temple—the house in which Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Christ worshipped, a house the marvellous Divine teachings of which science is every day unconsciously unfolding to the eye of faith—a house big enough and free enough to hold all men at all hours, without money and without price, a house in which we “all live, and move, and have our being.” Here we can all think on the Divine love, and pray. Nor, whatever you may specifically and religiously do in things material, would we ever have you despise or neglect this really Divine temple with all its marvellous aids to religious thought. But, while doing that, you can and ought to do the other thing also. You ought, out of the stones and clay of this inexhaustible storehouse, go and make other buildings specially adapted to the purpose of religious thought and worship, and not only build them, but use them, and induce all you can to avail themselves of their help. (*J. C. Gallaway, M.A.*) *A worthy theme for thought*:—Who were these people who declared to the Lord that they had thought of His lovingkindness in the midst of His temple? According to the title of the psalm, they were the sons of Korah—the singers in the house of the Lord. I think it is suggestive that they did not say, “We have sung of Thy lovingkindness.” They had done that; but they said, “We have thought”; and there are some singers who have not done that, for they have sung solemn words thoughtlessly, caring only for the music, and not for the meaning.

**I. THEIR OCCUPATION WAS GRACIOUS.** “We have thought of Thy lovingkindness, O God.” 1. Thought is a noble faculty; the power to exercise it distinguishes men from the brute beasts. We grovel when we are under necessity to perform the acts that relate only to the body; we rise as we are able to perform the functions of the mind and heart. 2. God’s lovingkindness is a theme that is specially worthy of thought. It is an amazing thing that He should ever have so highly favoured such unworthy persons as we are, and favoured us so long, tenderly, and perseveringly. 3. Such thought as our text describes is essential to all true worship. It is very much in proportion to our thought that we do really worship. Suppose we sing the praises of God without thinking; is that praising Him? Nay, no more than if we could have taught a parrot, or constructed an automaton to make the same set of sounds. 4. This task of thinking of God’s lovingkindness ought to be a very easy one, for there is abundance of material to think of in God’s lovingkindness. I beg you to consider the various acts of Divine grace, all of which are full of the lovingkindness of the Lord—the everlasting covenant, personal election, redemption, effectual calling, adoption, sanctification, final perseverance.

**II. THE PLACE WAS APPROPRIATE.** “In the midst of Thy temple.” 1. If we are in the midst of God’s spiritual temple, His true Church, we may well think of His lovingkindness in permitting us to be there. Some of your old companions are not here; perhaps they even ridicule the idea of coming to such a place as this. Possibly some of your former associates are now where hope and mercy can never reach them. 2. Standing in the midst of that temple, which is the true Church of God, we cannot help thinking of the lovingkindness of the Lord, for every stone in that temple testifies to His lovingkindness. These are the living stones that are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” 3. We may also think of the lovingkindness of the Lord in the midst of His temple, because everything in that temple reminds us of His lovingkindness. There was, for instance, the altar of burnt offering; and we can say, “Thank God for the lovingkindness which has provided for us the one great atoning sacrifice by which our sin is for ever put away.” There stood, too, the golden altar of incense; and every thoughtful believer says, “Thank God for the lovingkindness which has given us Christ to be our Intercessor before the throne of God on high, where His prevailing prayers are continually ascending on our behalf.” There also stood the shew-bread upon the sacred table; and we say, “Thank God for Him who, as the Bread of life, is the ever-present and ever-satisfying food for His people.” There, too, was the golden candlestick or lamp-stand; and we can say, “Thank God for His lovingkindness in having provided all-sufficient light for His people.”

**III. THE RESULT WAS BENEFICIAL.** 1. They were made joyous (ver. 11). So, think of the lovingkindness of the Lord to you, and see if that does not make melody in your heart unto Him, and cause the big bells in your soul to ring carillons of praise so full of jubilant gladness that your very body shall seem as if it could hardly bear the joy. I have sometimes seen an old church steeple rock and reel when a marriage peal has been run out from the ancient belfry; and, in like

manner, at times, one has felt so happy that the poor physical frame seemed as if it could scarcely endure such excess of bliss as the soul was delighting in the lovingkindness of the Lord. 2. Thinking upon the lovingkindness of the Lord would unloose our tongues (vers. 12, 13). If you have really tasted of God's lovingkindness, you must tell others about it. You cannot keep as a secret the love of God to you. The first instinct of a new-born soul is to tell its joy to somebody else. 3. As we think of God's lovingkindness, we shall be confirmed in our loyalty to Him (ver. 14). "This God is our God;" He was our father's God, and our mother's God, and the God of the dear ones whom He took from us to be with Him in heaven; and "this is our God." He is the God to whom we looked in the day of our soul's distress, when we saw Him in Christ Jesus, reconciled unto us through the death of His Son; "this God is our God for ever and ever." He is the God who has heard our prayers, the God who has been with us in our direst extremity; He is the God on whom we have cast our unworthy selves, trusting Him with our souls, and our all, for this world and the world to come, "this God is our God for ever and ever." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 10. **Thy right hand is full of righteousness.**—*Righteousness*:—In the classic pictures of the gods, some held in the right hand an olive branch, some a sceptre, Neptune a trident, Apollo arrows, Mercury a wand, Minerva a scroll, Venus a golden apple. It is a proof of superiority in this picture from the psalmist that his Deity seemed to reach forth a right hand full of righteousness. The word "right" comes through all the civilized languages, without much change, from an old classic radical, signifying straight or true to a rule. When the old mason found his work answering to the plumb-line, he said *rectus*; or answering to his level, or to his model, he said *rectus*. Hence righteousness signifies abounding in, conformity to a moral ideal, full of correspondence to some perfect rule of action or being. Religion has a less clear significance. When we have said that it is a spiritual binding of man to God, we have said all we know about the world's primitive significance. The relation between man and man is called society; between man and country, patriotism; between man and God, religion. Religion aspires to an ideal—that which it sees in God. Righteousness and religion must, therefore, be closely related. And to see this more clearly think of man's unrighteous conduct—what a history that is. No ancient sword was ever stayed while it had power to kill, or victim to be killed. Julius Cesar is said to have slain one million, two hundred thousand human beings; and the conquerors of Jerusalem put to death three million. Man has been a worse foe to man than have all the beasts of the forest, and all the storms or plagues of nature. Unrighteousness is the great foe of the human race. If one will sit down with this black history open before him, how beautiful upon its background will all deeds of righteousness appear, deeds that conformed to infinite right of neighbour. Whether you recall all the tenderness there has been in the world between parents and children, between friends, between rulers and subjects, and the justice of law and of the courts, each fact will reveal at once the divineness of righteousness, its whiteness, its sweetness. In estimating the worth of right, it is a great mistake if you limit this righteousness to the obedience of statute or common laws. Such limitation gives an honest man or a law-abiding citizen, but not a righteous man; for righteousness means abounding in right, in fitting, in appropriate action. When you watch by the bedside of the sick, or teach the ignorant, or comfort the sorrowful, or give to the helpless poor, you are acting righteously, because there are unwritten laws of humanity; there is an ideal law out of the statute, and above the statute, to which the deed conforms, and from which secures its title of righteousness. Whether there could be high and correct action without religion I am unable to say. I know of no data from which to draw a conclusion. The world has never made the experiment, for religion has always rushed to the field so early in all national life, that man has never been able to know what he might have done without that element. Blair, long ago, said, "You may discover tribes of men without policy, or laws, or cities, or arts, but not without religion." Plutarch had said the same. Hence it seems that the nature of man is such that it will never give science an opportunity to learn how perfect a righteousness there might be without the influence of a God. But how is it to be explained that a sense of righteousness and a belief in God appears simultaneously and invariably in higher forms of society? It is no accident any more than the simultaneity of the harvest field and the warm sunshine. God's right hand is full of righteousness, and the right hand of righteousness is full of

God. As a fact, all those who have been the students or servants of right have been believers in God. It is the man of science that generally moves away from the idea of God. Atheism has always been a camp-follower of the naturalist. From Lucretius to Huxley it has been so. But all the toilers in the domain of right, from Justinian to Webster, from Plato to Grotius, from Solomon to Franklin, have been near and firm in their friendship for the Divine idea. "True religion is the foundation of society." This is not from Huxley, but from Edmund Burke. "Religion is a necessary element in any great human character." This is not from Darwin, but from Webster. We mean no insult to the students of science, but mean that, as a fact, the study of law has always led the mind toward the Deity, and has thus revealed the casual connection between right and God. The inferences from this dependence of human purity upon God must be these—(1) Christ, in unfolding the character of God, in tearing down all idols, and in filling the universe with one spirit, infinite and blessed, has done a work that should bind Him upon the forehead and heart of man. (2) If God is the ideal of justice, it becomes the Christian world to see to it that His character is so painted that the human mind can look up to Him and feel the grandeur of the ideal, not to be repelled, but charmed and conquered. The blessed name must be freed from the whole terrific associations of ages of cruelty and brute force, and so set before mankind in the spotless robes of justice, that the human heart may ever gladly and securely rest therein. (*David Swing.*)

Vers. 12-14. **Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.**—*The love of Zion:*—So they revered the city on the hill. Their affections clustered round about its sacred courts. They loved the very tracks which led to it. "Blessed is the man in whose heart are the highways to Zion." The beaten roads were trodden deep in their affections. The stones of the building were clothed in rich and mystic meaning. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones." A radiant history made worship eager, grateful and assured. "We have heard with our ear, O God; our fathers have told us what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old." The hoary pile was beautified with the association of the spiritual splendours of other days. They gloried in their heritage. Such was the sentiment of the olden days. The nation found its unity in its common love of Zion. There are now many Zions. The exaltation of one particular mountain has ceased. Spiritual affections no longer find their points of convergence in a lonely and isolated temple. To-day religion has many homes, but because of the many abiding-places the strength of the general fellowship need not be impoverished. The zealous reverence for particular faiths creates the religious atmosphere of a people. Here, then, is our own Zion. What is the significance of this building to the family which gathers within its walls? To an uncounted host the plain old pile is a dear and honoured home. The very stones are revered. They are the shrine of a sacred sentiment. Here our fathers met and prayed. Here they had such visions of the Master as made them bold to confront the world. But it is not only that these stones are the shrine of a sacred sentiment; they are to many of you the house of a sacred experience. It was here you first saw the face of your Lord. It was here you were born again. I do not wonder that you love the old Zion. Every other place is a strange and unsuggestive lodging: this house is your birthplace and your home. "Tell the towers thereof!" What are the towers of our faith? Here is the primary stronghold: Christ is the alone-exalted head of the Christian Church. No one shares His headship or pre-eminence. No one can claim a deputed sovereignty. There is only one throne, and to that throne we may all come boldly, and find grace and mercy in every time of need. Christ is the alone-exalted head of the Christian Church. That is one of the strong towers of our faith. "Tell the towers thereof." Here is another of our strongholds: The Christian Church is constituted of Christian believers. The confines of a country do not mark the boundaries of a Church. Geographical measurements cannot delimit the magnitude of a Church. The Christian Church begins where Christian believers begin; it ends where they end. "Tell the towers thereof." Here is a third of our strongholds: Every body of Christian believers enjoys the guiding presence of the Holy Ghost. He has called Himself the Spirit of "Counsel and of Might," and as such will He stand revealed. "Mark ye well her bulwarks!" Yes, what are the bulwarks of our faith? What is the character of its walls? What is the nature of its defence? The defences of our faith are the resistance of its own redemptive grace. Spirituality is to be safeguarded by the

spiritual. The bulwarks of a saving grace are to be found in the powers of its own salvation. "Consider her palaces!" Yes, we are not afraid to consider the home-life created and sustained by the forces of our faith. "Consider her palaces," her dwellings, the family life which is nourished behind the ramparts of our faith. Can you conceive of any surer and firmer cement for the solidarity of a home than the immediate fellowship of each member with the Christ, in the common bond of the Holy Ghost? The palaces created by our faith, its family and its social life, are the abiding-places of the Eternal God. "Walk about Zion, go round about her: tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks: consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following." Is it worth the telling? Or shall we close the book and shelve the story? Can the twentieth century do without our faith? Is there no need for our towers, and our bulwarks, and our palaces? Have we a gospel which will redeem the coming man? Have we a faith which will sanctify the coming home? Have we a hope which will be directive and preservative of the purest elements in the State? Then let us proclaim it, and let us make provision for its proclamation. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The unity of the Church*:—The walk about Zion is an examination of her position and extent; going round about her implies a complete view of the entire circumference of the holy city. Filling her towers is an examination of her resources; marking the strength of her bulwarks is to admire her stability; considering her palaces is to exalt and glorify the majesty of her internal state. The study of the external and internal condition of the Church fills the heart with rapture and the lips with praise. In figurative martial terms the psalmist celebrates the position, strength, glory and perpetuity of the Church. Based upon the eternal rock, it will stand until the long-groaning creation awakes to hear the Easter hymn that is to be sung in the Jubilee of the final Sabbath. The uppermost questions that now challenge the attention of the chief nations of the world are of and concerning the Church. Much is being said about organic unity, which is another thing than ecclesiastical unity. A forest may be a unit—that is, one forest, all its parts nursed on the same soil and under the same conditions of climate, but it is not an organic unit, for it contains twenty species of trees, all trees, indeed, but not the same in trunk, fibre or branches. They grow together, but they have each their own special development. When, therefore, we talk of organic unity among Protestants, let us remember that the unity of a common life does not imply the necessity of ecclesiastical consolidation. Still, various branches of the Evangelical Catholic Church are every day coming nearer toward one another. And they are coming in virtue of the assimilating force that is deeper than creeds, and deeper far than preferences for mere forms, whether of worship or of government. That force is defined in Holy Scripture as "the Unity of the Spirit." And this is the only unity for which we need to pray or labour. To understand this unity, consider the meaning of three words. I. **CHRISTIANITY**. The Rationalist regards it as a system more or less divine which must needs be measured by human reason before it can bind the consciences of men. This low and inadequate view may be Protestant as against the superstitions of the Papacy, but it is not evangelical, inasmuch as it denies the infallibility of Scripture, the vicarious atonement of our Lord and its related doctrines. But Christianity is the complete revelation of the Divine will in the Scriptures. It is Christ revealing Himself to the human consciousness. II. **THE CHURCH** is one in historical transmission; and it is catholic, including all who fear God. Ecclesiastical arrangements are not of its essence, and do not interfere with its real unity, which is that of the Spirit. Rome has been fighting on a thousand battlefields to compel an external unity, but human nature will never submit to it. Such unity is but a dream, an ecclesiastical device. III. **RELIGION**. This is to some—1. An intellectual conception only. To others—2. Feeling, rapture. To others—3. A devout performance on the Lord's day. But—4. To the evangelist it is faith and holiness. (*Elbert S. Porter, D.D.*) *The beauty and strength of Zion*:—A diligent search into, and consideration of, the means and causes of the preservation and protection of the Church in the greatest dangers and difficulties, is a duty incumbent on us for our own support against sinful fears, and to enable us to that testimony which is required for future generations, to encourage them to trust in the Lord. 1. What is to be understood by the preservation and protection of the Church, so as we may look neither for less nor more than what we are like to meet with? 2. What is meant by searching into, and considering of, these causes and means of the Church's preservation? "Walk about Zion, tell her towers, set your heart to her bulwarks, consider her palaces,"

etc. 3. What are those causes and means of the Church's preservation, those towers and bulwarks which will not fail, whenever Zerah or Sennacherib comes, or whatever attempts are made upon Zion? 4. What reason is there why we should thus search into and consider these causes of the Church's preservation and protection? 5. What is the testimony which we have to give concerning this matter to the ensuing generation? "That ye may declare it to the generation to come."

(*J. Owen, D.D.*) *A view of national felicity, the cause of gratitude to God:—*

I. THE NATURAL ADVANTAGES OF OUR SITUATION. 1. Our soil is fertile, liberally rewarding the husbandman with "grass for cattle, and herb for the use of man"; with all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life. 2. No country in the world is more sufficient for itself, or more independent of every other; while from innumerable ports we disperse our superfluities and the fruits of our industry to every nation under heaven. 3. Our climate is mild, temperate and salubrious. We are neither scorched by excess of heat, nor made torpid by intense cold.

4. Our people are hardy and vigorous; patient of toil; docile, generous and open; attached to their country; intrepid in war, industrious at home. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR GOVERNMENT. 1. Ye have personal liberty, which, as it cannot be taken from you without a crime, so neither can ye alienate it of yourselves but for a time, and upon such terms as still keep you under the protection of the laws, to guard you from abuse, and to secure your hire. 2. Ye have political liberty. Every man is allowed to declare his sentiments concerning the measures of government, and to animadvert on them in the most public manner. 3. Ye have religious liberty in a very eminent degree. Every man is allowed to hold his own creed, and to worship God in his own way. III. THE FAVOUR OF PROVIDENCE.

(*J. Adamson, D.D.*) *The Church of God:—*I. THE CHURCH OF GOD IS OUR BIRTH-PLACE. Angels said, "This man was born there." II. THE CENTRE OF OUR CHIEF SOCIAL ATTRACTIONS. Are not our grandest associations connected with the house of God? These are the men that are to stand by us in times of trouble. These are they who are to counsel us when we go astray. These are the men who are to carry us out to our last slumber when we have done with our earthly toil. Oh! I want to be surrounded by church friends, some to counsel me, some to encourage me, some to cheer me and strengthen me. I want to sit with them, and sing with them, and pray with them, and die with them. III. THE HOME OF OUR CHILDREN.

IV. A REFUGE. Scafaring men do not always expect smooth sailing. Neither ought we on the sea of life always expect to have smooth sailing. You have not always had it the way you wanted it in the past. You will not always have it the way you want it in the future. But when trouble came you went into the house of God and found it a refuge. You had your troubles explained to you. V. OUR MONUMENT. It seems a very silly thing to expend one or two or three thousand dollars on a tombstone. But that which you do for the Church of God is your eternal monument. It is a living memento. VI. THE GATE OF HEAVEN. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The threefold glory of the Church:—*

I. Her TOWERS. These naturally represent the great truths that are lifted into prominence. There are some ten great truths curiously related and parts of one system. Five of them are like corner towers—the Being of God is central to all—then the doctrine of the Son, the Spirit, Man, and the Word of God. The intermediate connecting truths are the Mediation of Christ in Atonement, the Mediation of the Spirit in Regeneration, Justification by Faith, the Inspiration of the sacred writers, and the right of private study of Scripture. No one of these truths can be sacrificed without weakening the whole structure. II. Her BULWARKS. These as naturally represent the great barriers or defences of the Church, which act as restraints against wickedness and worldliness, serving both to keep in disciples and keep out evildoers. The Church has certain separating barriers which define her province and life, and restraining barriers which repel and restrain evil. No small part of the service of the Church in the world is found in the resistance to evil. What the dykes are to Holland the Church is to the community: it keeps out the flood of evil. III. Her PALACES. These suggest beauty, honour, delight, privilege, and may stand for all the privileges of the children of God. 1. Worship, with all the ordinances, sacraments, prayer, praise, etc. 2. Fellowship, both with God and saints. 3. Holy living and growing both in knowledge and grace. 4. Service to God and man. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The great city:—*Cities are prominent waymarks in human history. With them began the distribution of rights from the few to the many. Cincinnatus at his plough had his patriotism fed by voices from the city. Cities show us the most of man; they exhibit what life can be

made; they fortify genius so that its power runs not to waste; and out of the struggles of commerce, the breadth of view concerning human relations to which commerce leads, has sprung the best thought of what is due from man to man. When Henry the First—called "The City Builder," gave to cities peculiar privileges to induce his people to congregate, unwittingly he laid the grand basis of opposition to the Feudal system, and the legal foundation of popular rights. The people united to ward off the attacks of the lords or barons; union gave strength; the limit of locality made them develop their resources; commerce, art and wealth increased within their walls; energy grew and multiplied; the people became wealthy, respectable, educated and refined; better laws and institutions were desired; and thus the principle of human rights, leading to political equality, was gradually developed. Towers and bulwarks, high walls and fortified castles, were the defences of old; to walk about an ancient city was to mark these things; and the great story that was carried down from one generation to another was of huge walls and mighty gates—stories which we can hardly believe as we see the variety of these defences in the presence of modern arts of destruction. Then cities had to be set upon a hill, that no mountain might give the archers of the enemy a position of assault; or they must be reared, like Babylon and Palmyra, in the midst of a vast plain. But not so now. He who now walks about a great city to note its strength, its defences, its promises of superior greatness, does not mark down upon his map of survey walls, towers, bulwarks, palaces; for he looks into the character of homes, the intelligence and virtue of families, and he counts up schools and institutions of learning, benevolence, religion. Undazzled by all the glitter and show of wealth, unimpressed by the stately palaces, unmoved by the boasts of trade and commerce, and disregarding the growth of material prosperity that makes the grand exhibition of thronged streets and crowded marts—the river dotted with the white sails, amid which the floating vapour from the steam craft rises as incense, sending the thoughts out to sea and to the infinite, unimpressed, in his deepest nature, by all this, his great question is, How true is it that God and the Lamb have their thrones and servants here? How much is God the light of this city? How much of all this glory is as the costume of this oriental bride adorned for her husband, as we think of the city wedded to Christ? No interest of the city can be secured by deserting the Church or profaning the Sabbath. Religion is the patron of all good. She consecrates the child to God, that daily duty towards it may be more and better felt. She invokes a blessing in the school, and sanctifies education as the process of unfolding the mind, as the sun opens the flower, ripens the fruit, gives the seasons of the year. She comes to the workshop and to the lad at his apprenticeship everywhere, telling him labour is a great ordinance of God, and bids him aim to do well his task as a part of religious duty, assuring him that all effort or improvement has its relation to the moral culture and condition and prospects of the soul. Join the elements of duty thus presented, and we may be able to speak in Scripture language, with more than its original meaning, of "the crowning City, whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth." The city will be great. To walk round about her will be to walk about Zion, and to find something worthy of telling to the generations springing up around us. God will be known in her palaces for a refuge. (H. Bacon.) *A walk about Zion*:—As the Jews were very proud of their temple, and greatly inclined to magnify themselves on account of it, we feel as if we could sympathize with them in their joy and admiration when we picture them walking about Zion literally, and marking the towers thereof; but it may not occur to us, when under this feeling, that we ourselves, as a nation, have a far more magnificent temple than even the Jews had, for we have part and portion in the great Christian temple of which Solomon's was after all but the appointed type or symbol. The foundation of our Zion is not concealed. It is all before us in explicit revelation, and the great master builder Himself thus brings it fully into view, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." And, alluding to it still further, in telling believers on whom they rest, it is said of them that they "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." So close is the spiritual connection between Christ and believers. But we wish to show now that it is for the sake of the Church the world itself exists. I. THE IMPORTANCE TO BE ATTACHED TO THE TOWERS AND BULWARKS OF ZION, AND THE DUTY OF ALL TO HELP IN MAINTAINING THEM. The world is spared for the sake of the Church to be redeemed out of it, and the Church is to aid in gathering together the

souls that shall be saved. How much, then, does the world owe to the Church, for it is only for her sake that it is preserved. As the Canaanites were for Israel, who should inherit their land. II. ALL PEOPLE IN A CHRISTIAN LAND, WHATEVER THEIR POSITION, ARE UNDER STRICT OBLIGATION TO AID IN THE BUILDING OF ZION. Now, this duty is binding, not on private individuals only, but on men in their official capacities as kings, rulers and having authority. It would be strange if those who, by their position, could do most for this work, were free from obligation to do anything. All past history, as given in Scripture, contradicts those who would have no connection between the Church and the State. For kings and governments have helped the Church, have been commanded to do so, and been blessed for that which they have done. Then, "my soul, come not thou into their secret." Who would separate what God has joined? (J. Allen.) **Mark well her bulwarks; consider ye her palaces.**—*Bulwarks and palaces*:—The psalm speaks of Jerusalem, the pride of the Jewish heart, and the boast of the Jewish glory. It is described from two points: from that of admiring friendship, and from continuous enmity. In this symbolical poem the kings are represented as enemies. I. **BULWARKS SYMBOLIZE POWER AND STRENGTH.** I fail to discern any of the marks of decay and weakness with which the Church of God in our day is charged. Her towers are growing stronger, her glory more resplendent, her foes decrease, and her friends become more numerous. Some of the manifest emblems of power are—1. Christian civilization. The very air men breathe is charged through and through with Christian thought. 2. The Bible, for it is a great source of power. One of the surest proofs of its power is the virulence of its enemies. Men would not attack a book which is a dead letter. 3. The vast accumulation of wealth, and the number of churches. These are signs of power. The value of Church property in our land is unparalleled, and increases greatly every year. There is not a single heathen temple in process of erection in the world. The Church gives hundreds of thousands a year for mission work. Her light flashes away up in frozen Greenland, in Central Africa and in Polynesia. Christ will be universal King. II. **RICHES AND GLORY ARE INDICATED BY THE PALACES OF ZION.** 1. There is the palace of assurance—the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. These need no witness of guilt—of that men are conscious. When pardon comes we have the witness of the Spirit that we are taken into the family of God. 2. The palace of Christian fellowship. 3. That of Divine communion. Zion with her towers, her bulwarks, her palaces, is the joy of the whole earth. Now she is the Church militant, but shall be soon the Church triumphant. (J. H. Bayliss, D.D.)

**Ver. 14. This God is our God for ever and ever.**—*Our God*:—He is so. Nothing else is so as He is. Our time, wealth, children, bodies, souls are not, strictly speaking, our own. But God is. And we may know and claim this. David was ever making such claim. Oh Lord, he says, my strength, my rock, my fortress, etc. And this relationship is not of our making but of His. We choose and give ourselves to Him, but it is by His grace. And the relationship is permanent—for ever and ever. Every other relation breaks up; but this, never. And the soul exults in this relationship. (W. Jay.) **Ver. 14. God with all His perfections, the Christian's God**:—It is the unspeakable privilege of believers that God in Christ is their own God, and will be so for ever. In the Old Testament it was the joy of the devout Jew that God was his God. And the believer in Christ has the like joy. But only through Christ, who is called Immanuel, that is, "God with us." Eminent believers are represented as having a special interest in God. The patriarchs; Moses; the psalmists; David. And we may well rejoice in our relation to God, for He is almighty, wise, holy, just, omnipresent, patient, sovereign, good, merciful, love, faithful. Then, can we say, "This God is our God"? (G. Burder.) **Trinity Sunday**:—Great and awful is the subject which this Sunday brings before us—the greatest and most awful of any. It is not a simple historical fact, like those which we commemorate on other great days of our Church; like the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas Day, or His death on Good Friday, or His resurrection on Easter Day, or the descent of the Holy Ghost on Whit-Sunday, that we have to do with now. It is the revealed truth respecting God Himself; the unfolding to us, as far as we can receive it, of the name and nature of the Almighty. But this mystery has its practical side. Take—I. **THE NAME OF FATHER.** What word could more truly convey the love of God to us? II. **THE NAME OF THE SON.** What a revelation this is; how it brings heaven very near to us and clears the way for sinners to draw nigh

to the holy God. III. **THE NAME OF THE HOLY GHOST.** He it is who makes us holy, raises us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness and so fits us for the eternal inheritance. He is our Instructor; the Spirit of counsel, of knowledge and true godliness; the Spirit of God's holy fear. (*R. D. B. Rawnsley, M.A.*) **Bold yet unanswerable.**—There are three ideas in the text. 1. In the words "This God," we have a bold and unanswerable assertion. 2. In the statement that "This God is our God" we have a personal possession. 3. As He is our God for ever and ever we have an eternal joy. (*W. Birch.*) **Our God:**—The English word God is an Anglo-Saxon word, which gave not only the name, but told the character of God. For it means also "good." God did not show the glory of His face to Moses, but He blessed him with a revelation of His name. In the name Jehovah there are eleven different meanings, each of which describes the character of our God. Let me mention them in their order. The ever-existing Being whose nature and disposition are eternally the same; the strong God who can do all things; the merciful Being who is full of tenderness and compassion; the gracious One whose heart is goodness, humility and love; the long-suffering Friend who is never irritated with His people, and who suffers long and is kind even unto the unthankful and the evil; the bountiful Provider who overflows with beneficence; the true One who never deceives nor can be deceived, and who is the fountain of truth ever pouring wisdom and knowledge unto men; the Keeper of compassion for the suffering, the erring, and the penitent to all generations; the unselfish Being who himself bears the pain of iniquity, and who pardons transgression and washes away sin; the impartial Ruler who acts rightly to every creature; and the faithful Judge whose wise laws pour blessings on the righteous and inflict punishment on the wicked, and from whose just sentence the impenitent sinner cannot escape. Let this God be our God for ever and ever. I. **OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.** I was taught as a child to dread God. He was said to love me only when I was obedient, and to make a place for me in hell when I was not a good child. Feeling conscious that I was more bad than good, I dreaded God; and had a great fear of going to sleep lest I should die and see Him before morning. It was teaching as unwise as it was untrue. What a revelation when I read in the New Testament that Jesus was God! And when I felt He loved me, and listened to my prayer, and smiled upon me, I went forth to tell a little playmate who, like me, had lost his mother, that Jesus would be a gentle mother to him.

II. **OUR GOD IS ALSO A PRACTICAL GOD.** He teaches men the science of self-government. His intention is that His people shall be conformed to His likeness; and in order that they may copy Him, He gives the Divine nature to all who ask. God would have us run willingly in the path of His commandments. Some parents never let their children out of their sight, and so protect them from evil; but it would be better to teach them the fear of the Lord, so that they may be able to resist temptation and practise goodness. It is good to be saved from sin by any means, but it is best when our own principle holds us back from it. And so God does not hold us from temptation by outward force, but by the inbreathing of His Spirit; He would have us obedient children who love to do His will. God also deals practically with nations as with individuals. He is teaching nations the art of self-government, and is training men to see that war is not only a blunder, but a crime. III. I should like to have shown that **OUR GOD IS A PERSONAL GOD.** He knows you, He loves you, and He is now present with you! Speak to Him in prayer; He hears you. Seek His Holy Spirit; He gives it to you. Trust Him. (*W. Birch.*) **This God is our God:**—The revelation of the Deity to mankind may be represented as a twofold revelation. It has pleased God to disclose Himself to us in His works; that is, in the facts and the phenomena of the material and the intellectual universe. And it has pleased God furthermore to disclose Himself in His Word; that is, in the writings of holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. To each of these communications it becomes us to give reverent and earnest heed. We have, then, two sources of information concerning God. We have—let us call it so, according to the ordinary phraseology—natural religion; and we have revealed religion. Not contradictory, remember, at any point; not contradictory in any measure whatever. No, they are not at variance with each other; they are not independent of each other; they are not indifferent to each other. Truth cannot be opposed to truth. I have been led to say this in consequence of the particular cast and the phraseology of my text—"This God is our God." The question comes immediately, what God? what God is your God? All nature comes and proffers its answer, and all Scripture comes and proffers its



answer. They do not contradict one another, but they beautifully combine to give us an answer in which we may all rejoice. Who is your God? you may say to the good man in the hour of his rejoicing, who is your God? He that created the heavens and the earth, and who loved the world so as to "give His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "This God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our guide even unto death." Now, my business is to speak of the blessedness of the man who is able to appreciate this great truth, and my hope is that I may prevail upon many of you to ask whether that privilege may not become your own. It may, if you will. Do you, as I go on from point to point affirming that "this God is our God," do you say, "May He be mine too"? "This God." What God? Think—I. OF HIS INFINITE POWER. In creation, by a word; the earth and man, his body and soul. What power is here. This is my God, this God that has done all things that can be conceived of, whether "in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." Comes there before you now dangers, jeopardy, adversaries? Comes there before you now something that you are anticipating, of which you stand in dread? and you feel, would to God I had defence and protection for ever? Say to Him, "Who is our God? Thou art my portion saith my soul." Before you say it, He will answer. Who is our God? He it is who created the heavens and the earth by His mere commandment, and who could unmake them all to-morrow by a similar commandment, again upholding all things by the word of His power. He is our Father, and we are His sons and daughters, according to His promise. II. THE INFINITE WISDOM OF GOD. Do you not know what marks of consummate sagacity are meeting us at every step? There is that great and wide sea of which I spoke; possessed of an ingredient that maintains it in its purity, and yet getting discharged of that ingredient naturally and advantageously day after day! The great wide sea! The source of the fertilizing shower, the great receptacle to which those fertilizing showers return! Mark the wisdom there! There is the sun placed just in the position necessary for the beautiful diffusion of its light and heat; and here is our earth in its relation to the sun, so revolving as to obtain the benefit of its sunshine and of its warmth, and so related to it as to give us all the seasons in their turn. Wisdom again! III. THE UNSPEAKABLE MERCY OF GOD. For this see how righteousness and love, justice and mercy were harmonized. IV. HIS UNCHANGEABLENESS. And He waits to be yours. To reject Him is to perish. (*W. Brock.*) *The right God*:—It is all important that we should worship the right God. Now, in our text the psalmist made—I. A BLESSED SELECTION. "This God," amongst all other gods, shall be our God. For there were many gods of different name and nature. Some for one country and others for another. But in our day all Christian nations profess, whatever be their sect or denomination, to worship the same God. There are many Churches. Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Mormon and others. Now, which is the true Church, and what God is the right God? And we must each one make our choice. It is a responsibility that we cannot transfer. It is said that every man makes his own god. And it is true that a man will of necessity ascribe to God those faculties and attributes which he himself possesses and values most highly. "To the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful." Every rightly educated man in a Christian country must, after studying the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, believe in God our Father. If he be a man of balanced judgment, that is, if his mind be formed mentally "on the square," in my opinion, he must admit that the highest ideal, the noblest character, the most beautiful disposition that can possibly be described in human language is that of the Divine Being, our heavenly Father, as revealed by Jesus Christ. What a beautiful name is that of Father! And He is the Father of our spirits which, though the body may perish, are indestructible. And God is revealed as a pardoning God, freely forgiving our sins. II. THE BLESSED DECISION. "This God is our God." Believe in God's power and willingness to save us. Trust Him utterly, and through Jesus Christ He will save us. (*W. Birch.*) *The eternal Guide*:—It was an old Athenian custom to celebrate at the public expense the funeral of those citizens who had honourably fallen in war. At the close of the first year of the war between Athens and Sparta, Pericles was chosen to deliver the funeral oration. His eloquent words have been preserved for us in the pages of a Greek historian. He calls upon his fellow-citizens to fix their eyes on the present greatness of their city, and he continues, "When you are impressed by the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this Empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty,

and had the courage to do it. The sacrifice which they made was repaid to them; for they received, each one for himself, a praise which grows not old, and the noblest of all sepulchres. Make them your examples. Congratulate yourselves that you have been happy during the greater part of your days; remember that your life of sorrow will not last long, and be comforted by the glory of those who are gone; for the love of honour alone is ever young, and not riches but honour is the delight of men when they are old and useless." How striking is the contrast of this utterance with our psalm. This, too, has a national character. It records the defeat of the enemy, and, like the speech of the Athenian, points to the unimpaired glory of the national centre. Zion stands unharmed. No hostile army lies at her gates. Behold her in her beauty! Thy lovingkindness, O God, is in the midst of Thy temple. Our future is in Thy hands. "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our Guide even unto death." The contrast is instructive. There can be no question as to which member of it appeals to us—it is the Hebrew not the Greek standpoint that is ours. Not great statesmen, generals or scholars do we regard as the ground of our hope, whether national or individual, but God. If we have cause for congratulation, the cause is the Lord.

I. THE PSALMIST MAKES THE PAST THROW LIGHT ON THE FUTURE. He notes how God has interposed for His people, and upon such facts he bases his assurances for the future. Such is God—so mighty and so careful for His people. Our God, who has made our cause His own; for ever, for He is always the same. And as He has been, so He will be even unto death. And certainly, if the psalmist had been the most learned of historians, if he could have anticipated the large and minute knowledge and the elaborate philosophies of history which mark the present, he could not have reached a wiser conclusion. For if, in our studies, we leave God out of history or of personal experience, these give us no ground of hope for successful guidance in the future. If any one is satisfied to believe that he has reached his present success, or that the world has attained its present point of progress through human wisdom alone, I wish him joy of his conclusion, and should be interested to know how he reconciles it with the facts. The administration of the world has clearly proved itself to be altogether too large a thing for either the individual or the collective wisdom of mankind.

II. AND GOD IS OUR GOD. He is not merely an abstract fact, but a personal possession. "This God is our God." This permission to appropriate God is one of the most precious revelations of Scripture. God gives Himself to us. God's giving Himself in Christ is no new gift. He had done that long before Christ came. The psalmist had said, "Thou art my God, O God." That little word "my" represents the eternal relation of God to His people. And if God is ours, then, whatever is in God is available for us, is ours. A good many of you do not practically believe that. If you did, you would not worry and fret as you do. You will not accept God's large meaning. If a rich and wise man in whom you have perfect trust should come to you this morning and say, "For the rest of your life you shall absolutely command my purse, my knowledge, my experience," you would appreciate that, and would believe it, and would get substantial help and comfort from it. And yet God says to you nothing less than this. I am your God. All that you can receive as a man I put at your disposal. That is your new-year's gift if you will believe it. Some things God will not give you because they would hurt you. Other things He will not give you because you could not use them if you had them. In giving you Himself God gives you more than all His gifts combined.

III. THIS POSSESSION IS FOR EVER AND EVER. More than this year's future is assured. No king, no capitalist can say what you can. They cannot say of their crown, their gold, "This is mine for ever." The head that wears the crown must be laid low, and the rich man's gold pass into other hands. But God is ours for ever and ever.

IV. The thought is made specific—God is our God as our GUIDE. This idea of guidance is frequent in the Scriptures. See Israel in the wilderness. And our Lord, in the beautiful figure of the good shepherd—"He goeth before them." And in heaven, "the Lamb shall lead them to fountains of living waters." Such is God, our God, our Guide, an approved Guide. The history of His guidance, the map of the tracks by which He has led His people, is before us. The first instance has yet to be shown of one who has fared other than well by following God as a guide. Do you cite me the great army of the sorrowing, the persecuted, the martyrs? They have not fared ill if their own testimony is worth anything. They have had their choice. They could have forsaken God if they would, but they chose to follow Him through suffering to death. On their own testimony they

fared better with God and with tribulation than with the world and without God. And our Guide has unerring wisdom (Ps. lxxiii.). "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." Is it not worth trying? Suppose that for this year you literally accept it as the law of your life, to let God take care of you. Keep your hand in God's, your eye upon His face; do what He tells you; do your best, and believe with all your heart that God will do the best for you. I care not how many troubles and disappointments you shall meet—if you do not say at the close of the year that it has been the happiest, or rather the most blessed, year of your life, come to me and tell me I have misread God's promises. And what is this blessed promise but that which we find in Christ's words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) **He will be our guide even unto death.**—*Our Guide*:—How perfectly qualified God is for this office. In a journey it is unnecessary for the traveller to know the road; but the guide ought to know it; and when he is well acquainted with it and we have full confidence in him, we shall feel satisfaction notwithstanding our ignorance. Abraham went out not knowing whither he went; but he knew with whom. And so Job, amid all his perplexities, comforts himself with the thought, "He knoweth the way that I take." And our Guide indulges us with constant intercourse, and is equal to all our exigencies. He defends us, and is patient under all our provocations. And He continues with us all the way, even unto death, yea, and through it, "through the valley of the shadow of death." (*W. Jay.*) *God our Guide*:—1. If we were going to ascend Mont Blanc, we should seek for a guide in whom we could feel confidence; he must be a man of experience, one who had travelled that way many times, who knew every danger and how to avoid them; he must be a strong man, and one who would be able to render aid in case of accident, one who would not desert us in the hour of need, but stand by us even unto death; and many a guide has lost his life in these perilous ascents in the effort to save the traveller in his care. The guide would expect us to follow him, and to obey him, and no one would neglect to do this. So in our journey through life, One has offered to be our Guide and lead us safely to the heavenly Jerusalem. There are many dangers by the way, many pitfalls for the unwary and ignorant, and those who insist on going alone are sure to get lost; let us choose this Guide, for He has experience, He has travelled this way before, and He knows every step. He is a guide we can have such confidence in, we need never doubt Him for a moment, but He must be obeyed, we must follow Him just as He tells us. 2. Into what paths will He guide us? He led the children of Israel through the desert, but into a land flowing with milk and honey. And sometimes He leads His people through darkness, but the way leads up to light, through sorrow up to joy, through tears up to happiness; separations will end in reunions, weakness in strength, sickness in health. He will lead us into that land where shall be no more hunger nor thirst, where the sun shall not light on us, nor any heat. For He shall lead us unto fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no night there. What a glorious Guide and Leader! (*L. Shorey.*)

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#### PSALM XLIX.

**VERS. 1-20. Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor, together.**—*The inequalities of society*:—Impressive and instructive that scene in the wood of Senart, when a luxurious Louis, royally caparisoned for hunting, met a wretched peasant with a coffin. "For whom?" "For a poor brother slave, whom your majesty has sometimes noticed slaving in those quarters." "What did he die of?" "Of hunger." The king gave his steed the spur. Sad is it that such a contrast was ever possible on earth, and sadder still that it may yet be witnessed even in this enlightened and philanthropic land. There are other inequalities. I read, not long since, that a Glasgow bank director, convicted of having appropriated half a million sterling, was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment; and that on the same day a little half-starved boy, charged with stealing cake worth a halfpenny, was sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour and four years in a reformatory. "One law for the rich, and another for the poor." These social inequalities have led to much dis-

turbance. Christian divines have abandoned the subject to philosophers, agitators, and would-be reformers. It always has seemed to me that Christianity must have something to say that the world has a right to know; and unless this is done, there never will be a complete mastery of the problem. Social inequality must have arisen from some other kind of inequality. Social inequalities sprang out of the irregularities of human nature. No two men are made alike. Social inequalities are not without relief and compensation in some other kind of inequality. "Uneasy is the head that wears a crown," and uneasy the heart of him who owns millions of dollars. The Saviour did not devote His attention to surface measures of reform, but to a new heart, confident that the regeneration of man means the regeneration of society. (*G. C. Lorimer, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **I will open my dark saying upon the harp.**—*Dark sayings*:—Some minds are darker than a dark saying. Doubt is cloudland; and cloudland presupposes the existence of some degree of light. In complete darkness no cloud is perceived. The time at which a man begins to doubt is the critical point of life. Doubt in a young and inexperienced mind may develop into a demon of free thought. Much depends upon the way in which doubt is treated by the doubter himself, and by his advisers. Doubt is not a thing to be injudiciously dealt with. Take care how you open a dark saying. The dark saying is any question difficult to answer or hard to solve. Notice that David does not say, I will close up my dark saying—I will fold the serpent up in my bosom, and let it sting me. He says, "I will open my dark saying." Often enough a man's peace of mind depends upon the way in which he opens his dark saying. Too often he has to open it himself, without sympathy or help from any one. It may save us some disappointment if we settle it as a general rule that a providential thing does not mean a pleasant thing. The ultimate end of Providence is the sanctification of the human heart, and it is not probable that God will sanctify us by letting us have our own way. We frequently apply the term Providence loosely. When we reap worldly advantage we say, It is quite providential. When trouble comes we omit the word. The opposite of this is true as a rule. Prosperity will never wean us from this world, but adversity may. When dark sayings trouble us, let us pray to the Father of lights that He may guide us into all truth. We are vexed and mystified by second causes, because we forget that He is the Great First Cause of all. His providence to us is like a piece of tapestry reversed. We see that a hand has been at work, but the threads are massed in confusion. In the day of account we shall see the other side. David further says "upon the harp." Musical instruments are called instruments of God. It is to the Psalms, not to the Proverbs, that the heavy heart turns for consolation. Even when the harp hangs upon the willows, the spirit of song awakes in sympathy with the loved and lost. It was to the Psalms that the suffering Saviour turned in the hour and power of darkness. The introduction of the Gospel into Europe was marked by the strength of song. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God." Who shall say what resolutions, what ardent longings after purity, and peace, and truth, have been breathed into the souls of men by sacred song? "In days when liberty of thought was choked by tyranny, when bigotry warped the understanding and suppressed the truth, what was there left to the people but the emotion of a song?" The dark saying was opened upon the harp, and stray seeds of sanctity were germinated by the atmosphere of music, though sometimes it was but the music of some distant chime. By the power of song we are transported into a sphere where selfishness and worldliness have no part; a world where nothing defileth or maketh a lie. Man is the only creature who abuses the gift of sound. From him only comes the jarring note. He can only sing the new song in the world to come. (*Henry J. Swallow.*) *Dark sayings on a harp*:—My text points to two principles; first, there is the bowing before, and hearkening to, the mystery of things—the universal, parabolic utterances; and, second, the turning the mystery and the parable into a cheerful song—the dark saying becoming, like the bird's song in the covert of the night, a clear stream, without sorrow and without care. Find the cheerful aspect of solemn things. See how sorrow is rounded by cheerfulness; hearken, and you will be able to give a cheerful response to the most solemn views of life. The greatest mystery of all art, perhaps, is music; the soul that leaps from the mere material chords and pipes, and, whilst it emanates from, plays upon the spirit of man. There is a mystery and a meaning in music we can never either expound or

explore; and it is felt that those natures, which are the greatest burden and mystery to themselves, find most the solace of song in the combinations of all great sounds; we have known this, it is not always that in joyfulness of heart we sing. The girl oppressed by some great trial and loss, as she bends over her needle, or goes about her house-work, will sing, and, while she sings, finds unconsciously that her song has been her medicine, and has given to her relief. And something like this is a very general experience. Hence we have poetry for all cultured people, and hymns for holy people; and do we not know what it is to become happy while we sing? Good it is sometimes to utter the dark saying to the harp rather than to others; it composes, allays, and tranquillizes the mind while we utter it. Therefore, says David, "I will open my dark saying upon the harp." David was a master of the harp, and we see, plainly enough, that to him life was full of dark sayings, uttered with more or less of clearness, coming upon him with more or less of gloom. His dark sayings are abundant. We have often thought together of that wonderful summary of holy genius, the Book of Psalms. He would seem to have given everything to his harp; everywhere, as in the words of the text before us, "he was inclining his ear to a parable." To him, it would seem, nature was a great harp, framed, touched and moved by the finger of God, and every object became jubilant, and even prophetic. I. ALL SCRIPTURE ITSELF IS A DARK SAYING ON A HARP. However you regard it, you must be amazed by its mysterious unity, not less by its mysterious murmurs—murmurs as of a distant, infinite sea, or as in a forest we listen to the tones as of strange bells among the far-off boughs. There is a Divine reticence in the Bible; there is an awful secretiveness. Oh! it is all parable; it is all dark saying! Vainly do I ever think I have exhausted any single word or meaning; it is inspiration and revelation throughout. It is a "dark saying," for it is inspiration; it is "uttered," for it is a revelation. II. MAN HIMSELF IS A DARK SAYING ON A HARP. He is himself a universe of being in which life, and nature and grace seek to combine in music. Consider thy nature: how strange that we should be made thus, strange the opposition between sin and conscience, even in the best of men; strange the contradiction between what man effects and what man is. Has not his history through all time been a dark saying? What is this creature we call man? Is he angel, or is he beast, or is he fiend? for there are things he has done which warrant all these translations, read simply from the sensual eye. And what a mistake the life of man seems! And sometimes, how his failures and his inner conflicts seem to boast of him as of a being built out of the pieces of the wreck of the fall. III. AND PROVIDENCE IS A DARK SAYING ON A HARP. The mysteries of Providence were as startling to David as they are to us, and the very psalm whence I take this text recites and records them; it did not seem to be a world of highways to the psalmist; and this is one of the great causes of grief and of the dark sayings—the world and its sorrows. It is the cry, the incessant cry. "Why hast thou made all men in vain?" The world is full of dark sayings; it is hieroglyphic all, you feel the incongruity and the contradiction, but you have never felt it so clearly as the Bible has stated it, and especially the psalmists; they perpetually—Asaph, David and others—saw and uttered their sense of the solemn discords of this life. There is a picture I have often turned to look at in the chapel in one of the old palaces of France, and I have sometimes looked, as the dear dreamer said, till the water has found its way to my eyes; it is suspended over the altar—it is the cloud of eternity, and the Ancient of Days is there, and the Lamb is there, and round the circle the harpers harping with their harps—every one robed in white, and every brow bound with the crown—"kings and priests unto God and to the Lamb for ever"; every eye fixed on "the Lamb, as it had been slain," and every crowned form bearing a harp, and striking it "to Him that hath loved." "To them were given harps." Why, what does it mean? Oh, it tells how the lost life will regain and be restored to its unity. This is that harp, all the chords of the being one, and for ever one. Then, indeed, may we say, "I will praise thee on the harp, O God, my God." (E. Paxton Hood.)

*Mysteries set to music:*—I. THE MYSTERY OF NATURE. John Stuart Mill's arraignment of created things is too well known to be repeated. A more recent writer is Mr. Laing, who says in his *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, "Is it true that love is creation's finest law, when we find this enormous and apparently prodigal waste of life going on; these cruel internecine battles between individuals and species in the struggle for existence; this cynical indifference of nature to suffering? There are approximately 3,600 millions of deaths of human beings in

every century, of whom at least 20 per cent., or 720 millions, die before they have attained to clear self-consciousness and conscience. What becomes of them? Why were they born? Are they nature's failures and cast as rubbish to the void? To such questions there is no answer." Perhaps it is wrong to say there is no answer, for considerations exist in plenty which tone down the harsher aspects of nature's work. But when this is admitted there remains much that is enigmatical. Now, the effect of this mystery upon some minds is to drive them into pessimism; it is a mystery whose discord is for ever jarring on their ears. Not so with the man who walks by faith. He says, "I believe in God," and instantly there is harmony. Nature has mysteries still, but they are set to music. II. THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING. Huxley says, "If there is one thing plainer than another, it is that neither the pleasure nor the pains of life, in the merely animal world, are distributed according to desert, for it is admittedly impossible for the lower order of sentient beings to deserve either the one or the other. If there is a generalization from the facts of human life which has the assent of thoughtful men in every age and country it is that the violator of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment he deserves; that the wicked flourishes like a green bay tree while the righteous begs his bread; that the sins of their fathers are visited upon the children; that in the realm of nature ignorance is punished just as severely as wilful wrong; and that thousands upon thousands of innocent beings suffer for the crime or unintentional trespass of one." (*Evolution and Ethics*, p. 12.) The professor's statements are not cast in such a form as to be above challenge, but they may be taken as indicative of the attitude of many towards the problem of suffering. Broken law will explain much of the world's woe, perhaps more than we are apt to imagine; and the educative influence of suffering is not far to seek. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." But after all there remains much that is mysterious; very often moral sequences seem to fail entirely, and the good man dies in his struggles to do right, whilst the prosperous sinner lives to satirize every sound principle of commercial morality. Hence we have the cynic in our midst, and the pessimist is always within shouting distance. But the man who discerns spiritual things after a spiritual manner can feel something more than hard and unexplainable facts in the problem of suffering. God is behind it, he says, and therefore all is well. The mystery has lost its bitterness; it is still a dark saying, but it is a dark saying upon the harp. III. THE MYSTERY OF DEATH. Mr. Goldwin Smith looking at death and destruction in all grades of creation says, "Our satellite, so far as we can see, is either a mis-carriage or a wreck," and "if omnipotence and benevolence are to meet it must apparently be at a point at present beyond our ken." Mr. Smith answers himself when he says, "so far as we can see." Without God and immortality, the despair of the present generation is the most natural product of mental inquiry; the picture of blighted prospects and incomplete lives stricken down by the hand of death is enough to appal the stoutest heart. But in Christ all mysteries are set to music. It was the superior music of Orpheus which saved him from shipwreck on the siren's shore, and since hope springs eternal in the human breast, Christianity, as a gospel of glad tidings, will always play other tunes than the note of wailing and despair; in the future, as in the past, her better music will be the world's salvation. (*T. S. Knowlson.*) *Mysteries set to music*:—In seeking to get instruction from the text, we may regard it broadly as inculcating the principle, that the dark problems of the world may be so understood, that instead of leading us to despair they become a source of light and hope and joy. I. THE PROBLEM OF THE DIVINE EXISTENCE. This is the first of all problems—the earliest, the most necessary, the most irresistible. Primeval man long ago had to face it as we have to face it to-day. For the savage dwelling in the rude cave, or in the log-but, reared on piles driven into the ground in the centre of a lonely lake, this was the principal theme of speculation, even as it is still the question which by its vastness wearies the strongest thought, and baffles the keenest insight. The first of all questions is, at the same time, the darkest. Interrogate Nature, and what is it that it tells you? It tells of a first cause, powerful, mighty and omnipotent. It points to a force that is infinite, a wisdom that is transcendent, and a will that is all-dominant. But it speaks of more than this. It speaks of a law that is invariable, relentless and cruel. It has its tale of pain, and suffering, and sorrow, and death. If it glories in the sunshine and the rain, it recounts with grief the story of the plague and the earthquake, and the unceasing strife of man, and beast, and earth, and sea, and sky. Over all there is the one necessity, for

all there is the same struggle. II. **THE PROBLEM OF THE WORLD.** How did the world come into being? Is it the result of chance, of fate, of a blind force working how and as it may? No millions of years, no unimaginable stretches of time, can bring the existent out of the non-existent, the intelligent out of the non-intelligent, the cosmos out of the chaos. How, then, can we open this dark saying of the world's history on the harp? How can we set it to harmony and rhythm and music? There is one way only that I know. Behind the world there is a Divine Person; in the movements and the laws of the world there is a Divine will. All comes from God; all is under His care and governance. III. **THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S LIFE.** Taken as he is, and apart from his relation to God, man's life is inexplicable. It is a contradiction, without meaning or purpose. There is in it the high and the low, the pure and the impure, the spiritual and the material. It is divided in interest; it is driven this way and that; and oftentimes it becomes the sport of a power and a fate that are too much for it. But, in the light of the Divine love, and the mediation of Jesus, this enigma of the human life becomes plain. IV. **THE PROGRESS OF HUMANITY.** Nation follows nation, kingdoms and dynasties rise and fall, and there seems to be no real progress. Civilizations are more or less relative. We in these last times, notwithstanding our marvellous modern science and discovery, are, in some respects, behind the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, and Romans, or even the Celts and the Scandinavians. Is there any progress then at all as the result of the conflict of the ages? Is life in the main stationary, or does it like a mighty wheel go round and round for ever? The key to this question can alone be found in Christianity. It has already infused new life into the nations, it has re-created their moral standards, and it has given them a pre-eminence which the old Pagan peoples never knew. It has done all this because it has set before men not only an infinite hope, but because it has supplied them with the motive and the power to realize it. It has given them a new ideal, it has also provided them with a new dynamic, or force, by which they can attain the ideal. We need have no fear for the future. Humanity, instead of having become effete and lived its day, is only setting out on the line of infinite progress that stretches before it. Much it has done in the past, much it has achieved in these modern times; but infinitely more will it yet achieve before its course is run. Physically, intellectually, morally, the race has still before it a boundless destiny. (*R. Munro, B.D.*)

**The harp of the godly:—I. WHY ARE THE WORDS OF GODLY LIFE IN SCRIPTURE CALLED "DARK SAYINGS"?** 1. Because they are so far to seek. From the Creator, not the creature; from eternity, not from time. 2. Because they are so little known. The world disregards them. 3. Because they meet with so much repugnance. All the impulses of our depraved nature are averse and hostile to the wisdom that sanctifieth. Oh, how difficult to understand what opposes our heart's propensities! II. **WHY ARE THE DETAILS OF PROVIDENCE IN SCRIPTURE CALLED "DARK SAYINGS"?** 1. Because the specific designs of Providence are concealed. A man knows not whether in any enterprise, though he has scrutinized his motive and implored Divine direction, he is to fail or succeed. Through his failures may come his truest successes. 2. Because the aim of Providence is overlooked (*Eph. iii.; John ii.*). We fix our eyes on outward things, and call prosperity and adversity after them. That is a bright Providence wherein these abound, and a dark one whereby these are smitten. Now God looks at our souls;—their liberty from earthly fetters; their confidence in Divine support; their formation and sustenance of holy purpose; their culture and maturity of moral character. 3. Because the dispensations of Providence inflict pain and distress. What a dark passage leads to conversion! III. **WHY MAY A CHRISTIAN OPEN THESE UPON THE HARP?** 1. Because God has put a harp into your hands. It would be ungrateful not to use this. Do you ask what this is? I reply, The Gospel in all its plenitude of mercy, remedy, promise, prospect. 2. Because your dark sayings are thus opened, *i. e.* they become clear and plain. Devotion illuminates the mind. While you are musing the fire kindles and burns. 3. Because every true prayer is a prophecy. The evils it deprecates will assuredly pass away. (*W. Wheeler.*)

**Ver. 8. For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.—Redemption:—I. ITS SUBJECT—THE SOUL OF MAN.** Think—1. Of its powers. 2. Of its affections. 3. Of its duration. II. **ITS PRICE—THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.** III. **THE PERIOD OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.** It is limited; "it ceaseth for ever." How precious is time! what eternal results hinge upon its right employment or

neglect! (D. M'Allum, M.D.) *The preciousness of redemption*:—I. THE SUBJECT OF REDEEMING LOVE—THE SOUL. We cannot question its existence. Reflect upon—1. Its origin. 2. Its prodigious faculties. 3. Its duration. The soul is a flower that always blooms, a fountain which ever flows, a seed which never dies, a plant which never withers; that mysterious flame which, once kindled, nought can ever quench. 4. Its last and rescued state. II. THE VALUE OF THIS REDEMPTION. It is "precious." For consider—1. From what the soul of man is redeemed. 2. To what the soul is redeemed. Some of you have already tasted something of the pleasure which arises to the soul that has been sensibly freed from the trammels of sin and of Satan, and which anticipates the blessedness reserved in heaven for those who love God. 3. By what the soul is redeemed—the precious blood of Christ. III. THE LIMITS WITHIN WHICH ALONE THE BENEFITS OF THIS REDEMPTION ARE TO BE OBTAINED. "It ceaseth for ever." Consider, then—1. The uncertainty of life. 2. How this world deceives us. 3. And Satan also deceives. 4. The positive evil which springs from delay. (John Gasken, M.A.) *The preciousness of the human soul*.—I. THE SOUL OF MAN IS PRECIOUS. For—1. How high was the origin of the soul. See the history of its creation. 2. How vast its capacities. Small is the power of the human body, but the soul of man gives him a might and mastery all his own. 3. How eternal its duration. II. ITS REDEMPTION IS PRECIOUS. 1. See the greatness of the Author of Redemption. 2. The price that was paid to redeem us. 3. The stupendous nature of its results. These may affect the whole intelligent universe, and not this world alone. We are brought into a new relationship with God. Eternal woe is escaped and eternal blessedness gained. All this will be seen fully when the whole work of redemption is accomplished. How precious, then, must this work be. How important not to neglect it. (Hugh Stowell, M.A.) *The redemption of the soul precious*.—I. THE WORTH OF THE SOUL. The soul is precious to God, for it is His own workmanship—the end of creation, for which all earthly things were made, which received His blessing and obtained dominion over everything below. It is precious to the angels, for "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." It is precious to all Christians upon earth. How fervently and with what an undying flame did the love of it burn in the hearts of the apostles; and in how many forms did it show itself—in preaching, in writing, in continual prayer. And are not our souls precious to ourselves? If we find the soul to be precious, let us act as if it were so: if we discover that it is valueless, let us snatch the pleasures of life while they last. But the soul is precious. It must be so—1. From the statements of God's Word; 2. From its nature; 3. From the value of that which has been given for it; 4. From the means used to save it. II. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RECOVERING THE SOUL WHEN IT IS LOST. Our conduct in this world will determine our fate in the next. 1. The soul may be lost. 2. The soul must be lost, unless it be redeemed. 3. When once lost, the soul can never be regained. 4. The soul may be soon lost. It well becomes us, then, to improve our brief existence by endeavouring to secure the salvation of our souls; for in the future all is uncertainty but this one thing, that "the wicked are driven away in their wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." (W. Dickson.) *The value of a soul*.—When Sir John Franklin was lost, the most extraordinary measures were set on foot to recover him and his party. The British and American governments combined together to save him if he should be yet living. Nearly a million pounds were spent in the search. Besides money, good and fearless men were ready to expose their life in the distant hope of finding and relieving their missing brothers. The exceeding value of man's soul is seen in what Jesus has done for it. Men often put forth great efforts for very insignificant objects; but when we think of Christ leaving His bright throne in the heavens, and becoming a homeless wanderer upon the earth, that He might save lost souls, we are able to form some estimate of the soul's value. This was the life, the spiritual being, the deathless power breathed into man by the breath of God when he was made. It is our greatest gift, and that over which we should exercise the most sacred care.

Ver. 12. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.—*The worldling's downfall*.—I. A CARNAL MAN MAY POSSIBLY THRIVE AND PROSPER, AND GROW GREAT HERE ON EARTH (Ps. lxxiii. 3; Jer. xii. 1; Job. xxi. 7–10). The Scripture also giveth more light to this doctrine by examples, proving thus much unto us, that even the children of God, such as fear Him, and make



conscience of their ways, come often far behind the wicked in outward prosperity. Jacob, the loved, is put forth to keep sheep, and Esau, the hated, goes on hunting. If you look for Joseph, you shall find him in prison; for Daniel, you shall see him in the den. II. **THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED IS NOT PERPETUAL.** He shall not continue in honour; the words are properly, He shall not tarry all night in honour. We are wont to describe a short abode, by lodging in an inn, where a man seldom stayeth in his travel above a night. Now, the continuance of the carnal man in his honour and prosperity shall be far less; the time shall be, as it were, a degree shorter. The truth hereof is fulfilled by two means. For, first, either his prosperity continueth not to him, or else, secondly, he not to his prosperity. III. **THE WORLDLY MAN'S DEATH LIKE A BEAST'S.** In four things especially. 1. The first is, that he dieth unwillingly. So it is with the beasts. It is in the nature of everything to desire the preservation of itself, and to abhor the contrary. Hereupon in the unreasonable creature there is a kind of struggling and wrestling with death, so that it doth not but by violence yield thereunto. Even so it is with the ungodly, which mindeth only earthly things. His death may be peaceable in show (the natural strength being wasted and abated by some long sickness), and in speech, he may pretend a willingness to depart; but it is impossible that it should be with fulness of inward consent. 2. The second particular wherein this earthly man is like to the dying beasts is this: the carcase of the beast so dying cannot choose but be noisome and unsavoury; the smell is offensive unto every one that passeth by, and the sight displeasing. So is the dying worldling in God's sight. 3. The third degree of likeness betwixt the dying beast and the dying worldling is this: the body of a beast, whom such a disease hath quelled, becometh a prey to the fowls of the air, and is torn in pieces by other beasts; Where the carcase is, thither the eagles resort, saith our Saviour. It fareth so with the worldling: for as his goods ill-gotten come many times, through the just judgment of God, to be a prey to others, and to be the spoil of strangers, so his soul is seized upon by the damned spirits, and is presently arraigned before the judgment seat of God. 4. The fourth point of likeness is this: there is no regard had of the death of a brute beast, the remembrance is soon gone. The owner may haply bewail that loss, it being some diminution of his substance; but otherwise it is a matter which the world passeth by and taketh no notice of. So is the death of the carnal worldling. There may be some sorrow among his own people, who received some outward benefit by his means, and with them his memory may continue. But else there is no miss. (S. Hieron.)

Ver. 13. **This their way is their folly.—The folly of sin:**—There can be no greater evidence of the degeneracy of mankind than their fond pursuits after the things which are light and momentary, and their wilful neglect of those which are of the greatest value and concern. 1. It is egregious folly to rely upon false principles, to build upon tottering and deceitful foundations; and yet so doth every vicious person. He discards all principles of right reason and understanding, and steers himself only by those which are apparently false, and have no other bottom than his own deluded fancy. 2. Then it is a high piece of folly to take up and content ourselves with small things, when we may be more welcome to greater, to strive for petty matters, and in the meantime to neglect those of moment, to aim only at base and unworthy ends, when we have high and noble ones to busy ourselves about; and yet this every sinner is apparently guilty of, and thereby betrays his folly. Children and fools pick straws, and tie knots on bulrushes, entertain themselves with trifles and impertinences, and we may gravely smile at these their follies, and think we can do no less when we take notice of them. But, alas! their sport is our earnest, and their childish toys and rattles are but emblems of men's serious employments and businesses. 3. He in the accounts of all intelligent persons is no other than a fool, who being left to his liberty and choice, chooses sensual and earthly delights before those that are spiritual and intellectual; and this is the guise of all sinners. Thus the intemperate and luxurious person most vainly esteems the pleasures of the taste and the delights of the palate above the more noble relishes of Divine and heavenly joys, which are the repast of the blessed, and the food of angels. The lascivious person unreasonably values the transitory emotions of his lust and lewd desires before the greater and more cherishing flames of Divine love. The covetous hugs his gold and silver, and broods over his bags with a mighty pleasure, preferring this before that other more generous and noble one of doing good with his wealth, of relieving some poor

and comfortless widow, of succouring some fatherless child, of cheering the heart of some good man who is fallen into poverty, and is ready to perish. I appeal to any wise man, whether this be not a greater and more substantial pleasure than the other, whether this will not create a more lasting comfort in a man's mind. And the same is to be said of all the pleasures which accompany the performance of good and holy actions: they are solid and durable, they are real and substantial, because indeed they are spiritual and Divine. But silly birds will fly to painted grapes; deluded sinners prosecute those delights which are false and counterfeit: they hunt after mere shadows, than which there cannot be a greater evidence of their folly. 4. Is it not folly to mind those things only which are present, and to have no eye at all to futurity? Do not sinners merit for this strange improvidence and stupidity to be reckoned among idiots? Nay, do they not deserve for this to be ranged among brute beasts, who mind only what is directly before them, but have no sense of that which is to come? Opposite unto which is the posture of the prudent man, who, Janus-like, is double-faced; he not only entertains his eyes with things that are past and present, but he looks forward to what is future, and dwells on the thoughts of those great things which are to be hereafter. By faith, which is founded on infallible revelation, he expects future treasures, riches, honours and delights; and on this persuasion and hope he despises this vain world, and is resolved never to dote on its gaudy and glittering follies. Not that he bids adieu to society, and turns religion into melancholy and solitude, but he lets not this world gain any great portion of his affections, or divert him from thinking of and preparing for that future state in the other life. 5. Can it be deemed any other than folly and madness to take great pains to purchase the eternal torments of hell, and to fit oneself for the devil? It was complained of at Rome in the days of Nero, and other bloody emperors, that death itself was grown costly, and criminals could not be executed without large fees; but hardened sinners buy their death and damnation at a very dear rate, and yet are never heard to complain of it, which argues their prodigious madness and stupidity. 6. What title but that of "fool" ought to be fastened upon him who, pretending to eternal happiness hereafter, never uses those means which are proportioned to that great end? If the intemperate man knew where a club of the debauched were met together to fill themselves with wine and empty themselves of their reasons and understandings, and knew withal that their reckoning at last must be every man's blood, and the shot must be paid with their lives, would he not, think you, refrain from that meeting, and be persuaded not to be their comrade for that time? And this very person knows right well that luxury and drunkenness are awarded with no less than everlasting burnings, if the writings of the holy apostles be authentic, as certainly they are. What greater frenzy, then, can men labour under than to be guilty of the commission of sin in such circumstances, when they are convinced that they do amiss, and know that they take the wrong way to happiness, and see beforehand the unavoidable penalty of their misdoings? 7. Is not he to be esteemed a fool or a madman who glories in his shame, and boasts of that which is a real disgrace and reproach to him? Boasting at best is a loud indication of folly, but this is the grossest sort of folly to brag of that which really debaseth us, to be proud of that which renders us vile and abominable. He is a fool indeed that makes a mock of sin. 8. It is the utmost degree of folly and frenzy to be confident and secure in the midst of the greatest dangers, and to be wholly unconcerned in that condition which is like to prove most perilous and destructive. This is the case of refractory sinners, and is as great a testimony of folly as can be produced. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) **Yet their posterity approve their sayings.**—*Disregarded signals:*—The question is sometimes discussed as to whether it were better to have lived in the first ages of the world, or in these later times. For some reasons, perhaps, it would have been better to have lived in the earlier ages, but we who live in the ends of the world have opportunity to profit by the experience of those who have gone before us. They tried a variety of experiments, and we may be guided by the results which often cost them so much. I. LET US NOTE AND ILLUSTRATE THE FACT AFFIRMED BY OUR TEXT. Mr. Romanes, who has specially studied the minds of animals, says that we may infer intelligence in an animal whenever we see it able to profit by its own experience. But is it not the sign of a higher intelligence, the sign of human intelligence, that we are able to profit by the experience of others? Just as when a ship is lost, if it be possible some signal is placed on the fatal spot to apprise other vessels of the danger and to direct them into safe channels, so the merchant, the general,

the statesman, consult the signals held forth by history that they may not make shipwreck of fortune, fame, or greatness. And yet our text accusing men of disregarding the lessons of history is painfully true. Whilst as a general rule men are anxious to profit by the experience of their ancestors on questions touching social or material interests, they are not nearly so scrupulous to profit by the moral page of history. Baxter tells how he once saw a man driving a flock of lambs, and something meeting and hindering them, one of the lambs leaped on the wall of a bridge and fell over into the river; whereupon the rest of the flock one by one leaped after it and were nearly all drowned. Thus we men often act blindly, madly. II. WE INQUIRE INTO THE REASONS OF THIS STRANGE CONDUCT. How is it men allow themselves in courses which have manifestly proved fatal to their predecessors? 1. Men blind themselves to the lessons of history by persuading themselves that variations of time and circumstance will prevent in their case the disastrous consequences which happened to others. No error could be greater than this, none more disastrous. What are circumstances to us? Absolutely nothing in comparison to the principle involved in the act, and whatever may be the surface variations the underlying principle will not fail to assert itself; and lust, pride, greed, vanity, materialism, ambition, thoughtlessness, will produce the fruit of misery and shame and ruin in any body, in any age, and in any place. 2. Men blind themselves to the lessons of history by presuming on their cleverness. It is manifest that specific sinful courses have proved the ruin of myriads, but we to-day meditating the same courses expect to come safely through by virtue of our acuteness. We form the fatal fancy that men perish not because they are wicked, but because they are weak; not because they are sinners, but because they are simpletons. In some parts of the Tyrol where the shooting has been severe, the birds of passage are said to deflect from their usual line of flight so that they may avoid the dangerous districts; but we persist in crossing dangerous places although we know countless numbers have fallen victims to the fowler, and this we do from one generation to another. Darwin tells us that animals learn from experience, imitating each other's caution, and no animal can be caught long in the same kind of trap. But man is far less cautious. The devil keeps on using a few old traps smelling of the blood of ruined generations, and he has little need either to hide his traps or to change them; the same old baits—thirty pieces of silver, a wedge of gold, a rag of purple, a pretty face, a bottle, are abundantly and sorrowfully successful one age after another. If there is any acuteness about us, let us show it by letting evil things alone. 3. Men blind themselves to the lessons of history by presuming on their strength. "I know where to draw the line, where to pull up, where to put my foot down; they will find no weakness in me." Men forget that once committed to a downward course they soon acquire a momentum not to be broken, not to be controlled. Some time ago the papers told us about a Californian stage-driver who was dying, and who in his delirium kept on exclaiming, "I am on the down-grade, and I can't reach the brake." Many a soul to-day is swinging down the dizzy steep and cannot stop. History teems with warnings. And you need not go to remote days for awakening, convincing examples. "This their way is their folly, yet their posterity follow in their steps." Oh! do not join them. Join the noble procession that moves upward, and with them shine as the stars for ever and ever. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Refusing to learn by experience*:—The power of learning by experience is the special prerogative of man. 1. Birds are endowed with that wondrous thing which we call instinct, about which we know as much when we have so labelled it as we did before; but with all their instinct they have but little power of learning from their own experience. There is no historian amongst them—none to tell them of the past. So they travel round the same circle, and the last nest of a bird in the millennium shall be the same as the first in Paradise. The lark has never learnt to add one single bar to his carol. As the first did sing when he first broke the stillness of morning, so the last shall warble to the silent night. This power of taking other men's failures and making them the lamp to guide our feet is reserved for man. 2. It is only when men use this power that it is profitable. The inhabitants of this island began with mud hovels, and they ended with marble palaces! There is Stonehenge, and there is also Westminster Abbey, and what is the cause of the difference?—each generation learning from the other. The wonderful implements for conquering the earth which are now used by agriculturalists are the result of past experience; and the marvellous skill of the medical profession is owing to its members bringing into practice their own knowledge,

enriched with that of past ages in respect to medical science. Look at the power which is now possessed of navigating the seas, by means of steam and the mariner's compass, to that which the ancients possessed. From the rock where one ship is split to pieces is plucked "the flower safety" for others who have to pass that dangerous way. 8. Multitudes fail to use this power of learning from experience in regard to the best, or spiritual things. They ignore past history, and despise the teachings of experience. Though it be proved that a certain way was a foolish one, yet they pursue it. When a young man goes on the path of pleasure you may show him a massive volume filled with the names of young men who have ruined their health by pursuing this path; another volume containing the names of those who have blasted the hope of thousands; and yet another, of those whom this path brought to despondency and they went on the sea of life, no one knows where; but despite of this they will pursue the same road. When the silly moth comes about the flame, how you would like to tell it how many thousands of moths have been killed in the same way; and if it had ears and speech how you would be surprised if it replied to your warning by saying, "Ah! but I am going to try an experiment as to whether I possess fire-proof wings." (C. Vince.)

Ver. 14. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them.—Two shepherds and two flocks* (with Rev. vii. 17):—These two verses have a much closer parallelism in expression than appears in A.V. The R.V. renders the former of my texts, "Death shall be their shepherd," and the latter, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd." The Old Testament psalmist and the New Testament seer have fallen upon the same image to describe death and the future, but with how different a use! The one paints a grim picture, all sunless and full of shadow; the other dips his pencil in brilliant colours, and suffuses his canvas with a glow as of molten sunlight. The one is speaking of men whose portion is in this life, the other of men who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. I. THE GRIM PICTURE DRAWN BY THE PSALMIST. 1. Death a shepherd! What a grim and cold inversion of a familiar metaphor! "Death is their shepherd." Yes, but what kind of a shepherd? Not one that gently leads his flock, but one that stalks behind the huddled sheep, and drives them fiercely, club in hand, on a path on which they would not willingly go. The unwelcome necessity, by which men that have their portion in this world are hounded and herded out of all their sunny pastures and abundant feeding, is the thought that underlies the image. Ask yourself the question, Is the course of my life such as that the end of it shall be like that?—a grim necessity which I would do anything to avoid. 2. This first text suggests not only a shepherd, but a fold. "Like sheep they are thrust down to the grave." He does not mean either the place where the body is deposited, or a place where there is punitive retribution for the wicked, but he means a dim region, or, if I might so say, a localized condition, in which all that have passed through life are gathered, where personality and consciousness continue, but where life is faint, stripped of all that characterizes it here; shadowy, unsubstantial, and where, according to the metaphor, there is inactivity, absolute cessation of all the occupations to which men were accustomed. But there may be restlessness along with inactivity; may there not? And there is no such restlessness as the restlessness of compulsory idleness. That is the main idea that is in the psalmist's mind. 3. The kind of men whom the grim shepherd drives into that grim fold. The psalmist is speaking of men who have their portion in this life. Of every such man he says, "when he dieth he shall carry nothing away"—none of the possessions, none of the forms of activity which were familiar to him here on earth. He will go into a state where he finds nothing which interests him, and nothing for him to do. Surely there can be no more tragic folly than the folly of letting myself be so absorbed and entangled by this present world as that when the transient has passed I shall feel homeless and desolate, and have nothing that I can do or care about amidst the activities of eternity. II. THE SUNNY LANDSCAPE DRAWN BY THE SEER. To begin with, note the contrast of the other shepherd. "Death shall be their shepherd." "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd." All Christ's shepherding on earth and in heaven depends, as do all our hopes for heaven and earth, upon the fact of His sacrificial death. It is only because He is the "Lamb that was slain" that He is either the "Lamb in the midst of the Throne," or the Shepherd of the flock. He is the Lamb, and

He is Shepherd—that suggests not only that the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ is the basis of all His work for us on earth and in heaven, but the very incongruity of the metaphor making one who bears the same nature as the flock to be the Shepherd of the flock, is part of the beauty of the metaphor. They follow Him because He is one of themselves, and He could not be the Shepherd unless He were the Lamb. But then this other Shepherd is not only gracious, sympathetic, kind to us by common participation in a common nature, and fit to be our Guide because He has been our Sacrifice and the propitiation of our sins, but He is the Lamb “in the midst of the throne,” wielding therefore all Divine power, and standing in the middle point between it and the ring of worshippers, and so the Communicator to the outer circumference of all the blessings that dwell in the Divine centre. He shall be their Shepherd, not coercing, not driving by violence, but leading to the fountains of the waters of life, gently and graciously. And it is not compulsory energy which He exercises upon us, either on earth or in heaven, but it is the drawing of a Divine attraction, sweet to put forth and sweet to yield to. There is still another contrast. Death huddled and herded his reluctant sheep into a fold, where they lie inactive but struggling and restless. Christ leads His flock into a pasture. He shall guide them “to the fountains of waters of life.” (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The sheep of death*.—The whole psalm pours contempt on wealth, pursues it with the most incisive and biting irony. Its pictures of the man who devotes his whole life to amassing a treasure of which, when he takes the inevitable journey of death, he cannot carry so much as a single shekel with him; of the man who calls his lands after his own name, as if to cheat death itself, and to secure a bastard immortality, perpetuating his name on earth while he himself perishes in Hades; and of the man who thinks it possible to bribe death, and buy the power “to live on for ever,” are quick with a scorn beyond that of satire. They tremble with a fervid moral indignation and contempt for the folly which can mistake wealth for man’s chief good. Wealth is not man’s chief good; it is wrong, it is wicked, it is a profound and fatal violation of the Divine law and order, to make it the governing and supreme aim of life. For all who do that, even though they violate no human law, and even though they acquire but little of the wealth they seek, the psalmist cherishes a pure, unutterable scorn. To him they are losing the very form and status of men. They are sinking to the level of “beasts that perish”; i. e. they are living as though they had no life but this, as if death were not, as if there were no light beyond the grave. But there is one picture of them, still hidden from us by a thin veil of words, in which his scorn for these brutish people culminates in a figure as terrible, perhaps, as any in the whole range of Scripture. In verse 14 he depicts them as the “sheep of death.” The opening clauses of the verses, rightly translated, run, “Like sheep they are gathered to Hades; death is their Shepherd” (He who feeds or finds pasture for them; not he who feeds on them). What the psalmist means is that men who make wealth their ruling aim are not simply like the beasts that perish, but are in very deed the sheep of death; that it is death whom they have chosen for their shepherd, instead of God, the Author and Source of life; that it is Death who finds pasture for them while they live, and who, when they die, drives them to his fold in the unseen world. Think of it! The sheep of death—men following that grim shadow to the darkness in which it dwells! And these the men who “bless their souls” (ver 18), whom the world praises because they have done good to themselves, whose “sayings” the world quotes and approves after they have gone to their long, dark home! Was there ever a more grisly and dreadful metaphor? And yet is it one whit too dreadful? Is it not true that every man who trusts in riches, or longs for them as his chief good, is pursuing death, not life; has taken for his shepherd “the dark Shadow feared of man,” although he knows it not? Can we not see in that very trust or longing the very brand of death, the private and distinctive mark of that grim Shepherd? (*The Expositor*.)

Vers. 15–20. **Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased.**—*Empty-handed we depart*.—I remember an Eastern legend which I have always thought furnished a remarkable commentary on these words of the psalmist. Alexander the Great, we are told, being upon his death-bed, commanded that when he was carried forth to his grave his hands should not be wrapped, as was usual, in the cerecloth, but should be left outside, so that all might see them, and might see that they were empty; that he, the possessor

while he lived of two worlds—of the East and the West—and of the treasures of both, yet now, when he was dead, could retain no smallest portion of these treasures. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *A sand sorrow:*—A story is told of a child crying by the seashore, and when mamma asked nurse the reason, her reply was, "Please, ma'am, it's because he can't bring home the holes he has made in the sand."

"How many weep because they cannot take  
To their last home the many holes they make."

The deepest mines of wealth will have to be left behind. Wells of earthly joy cannot be taken with us. Hast thou buried thy talent? Thou wilt have to leave it.

### PSALM L.

VERS. 1-23. The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.—*The first of the Asaph psalms:*—This, the first of the Asaph psalms, is separated from the other eleven (Ps. lxxiii.—lxxxiii.) for reasons that do not appear. Probably they are no more reconcilable than the verbal resemblance between the summons to all the earth at the beginning of Ps. xlix., and the similar proclamation in the first verses of Ps. l. The arrangement of the Psalter is often obviously determined by such slight links. The group has certain features in common, of which some appear here: *e.g.* the fondness for descriptions of theophanies; the prominence given to God's judicial action; the preference for the Divine names of El, Adonai (the Lord), Elyon (Most High). Other peculiarities of the class—*e.g.* the love for the designation "Joseph" for the nation, and delight in the image of the Divine Shepherd—are not found in this psalm. It contains no historical allusions which aid in dating it. The leading idea of it—*viz.* the depreciation of outward sacrifice—is unhesitatingly declared by many to have been impossible in the days of the Levite Asaph, who was one of David's musical staff. But is it so certain that such thoughts were foreign to the period in which Samuel declared that obedience was better than sacrifice? Certainly the tone of the psalm is that of later prophets, and there is much probability in the view that Asaph is the name of the family or guild of singers from whom these psalms came rather than that of an individual. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The religion of man:*—I. A SOLEMN JUDGMENT AWAITS THE RELIGION OF MAN. 1. Its Author. "The mighty God," etc. (1) Omniscient. (2) Absolutely righteous. 2. Its witnesses. "He hath called the earth," etc. 3. Its grandeur. "Our God shall come," etc. The Eternal seems now silent; souls deafened by sin hear not His voice, but He will speak in thunder to them in the coming day. 4. Its officers (ver. 5). Who are the officers? (Matt. xxiv. 31; Ps. civ. 4). "Gather My saints;" what a gathering! From whence? To whom? What for? 5. Its rectitude (ver. 6). We may deceive ourselves, as well as others now; but the undeceiving period draweth near, and a period of inexpressible solemnity it will be to us all. II. THE WORTHLESSNESS OF MERE CEREMONY IN THE RELIGION OF MAN. 1. You can give God nothing in your offerings. All belongs to Him. 2. He requires nothing. He is absolutely independent (vers. 14, 15). III. The VALUE OF RIGHT-HEARTEDNESS in the religion of man. 1. The nature of spiritual religion. (1) Hearty gratitude. "Offer unto God thanksgiving." Not because our thanksgiving is of any service to Him; but because it is right that His moral creatures should appreciate the favours He bestows upon them. Because it is necessary to their own virtue and happiness. Genuine thankfulness of heart to God is the paradise of spirits. Heaven is praise. (2) Hearty vows. "Pay thy vows unto the Most High." Resolve to love, worship, and obey the great God; and in genuine earnestness carry out the vows in daily life. (3) Hearty prayer. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble"—with thine own voice, in thine own language, from thy own heart (Phil. iv. 6). 2. The advantages of spiritual religion. (1) Divine deliverance. "I will deliver thee." (2) Divine approbation. "Thou shalt glorify Me." That is, thou shalt honour Me. What a reward! (*Homilist.*) *Preparation to meet*

*God*.—The whole business which we have in the world is this, to prepare to meet God. This is the meaning of the whole Bible, to warn us that we must meet God, and to afford us every assistance and encouragement in this preparation. It is this in which mankind differs from all other creatures of God which we know of. Angels have not this call made to them. Brute creatures have not to appear before Him. Every man that is born must at last come into His presence. "Who may abide the day of His coming?" Our Lord's warning is, "Be ye ready." What it will be to "meet our God," no heart of man can conceive; for what thought of man can ever understand what God is? But we may come to know Him even in this world far more than we think we can, as He is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. The thought of meeting God is of itself so awful that we might have been disposed to sit down in despair at the contemplation of it, were it not for this access to the Father which we have in Jesus Christ. It is of infinite consequence that we should be prepared, "lest that day should overtake us unawares." And we know in what way we are to be prepared, what the things are which will be required of us. We cannot undo the past, which must all come before the all-seeing eye of the Judge; but, during the little time that remains to us, we can earnestly ask forgiveness, with fastings, and prayers, and tears, for the sake of Christ; and thus we may, with God's mercy, gain some hope and comfort before we die. (*Plain Sermons by authors of "Tracts for the Times."*)

**Ver. 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.**—*Zion the abode of God*.—I. THAT GOD DWELLS IN THE CHURCH. 1. In the congregation of the righteous. 2. In the hearts of His people. II. THAT THE CHURCH IS "THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY" only when God dwells in it. Otherwise the Church is as the world without the sun; an army in battle without its general; a ship in distress without the pilot. III. THAT THE CHURCH IS GOD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL DWELLING-PLACE. 1. Here His love is most of all shown, and—2. His praises most celebrated. (*W. Nicholson.*) *The beauty and lustre of the Church*.—I. JUSTIFY AND ILLUSTRATE THIS DESIGNATION OF ZION. 1. Its nature, not alone natural, but yet more spiritual. And so in regard to any Church to-day. Its beauty is not in that which worldly men admire—riches, rank, etc., but in the deep spirituality of its members. 2. Its source—Divine grace. 3. Its medium—Christ. 4. How wrought—by the Holy Spirit. 5. Its contrast to the deformity all around. II. IN WHAT SENSE GOD HATH SHINED OUT OF ZION. 1. There His nature and character are revealed. 2. Thence the blessings of salvation flow down to men. 3. In her midst Christ will judge the world. III. CONCLUSION. 1. Value spiritual beauty beyond all else. 2. Such beauty is the glory of every Church. 3. Be concerned that God may shine out of the midst of the Church with which we are connected. 4. You unsaved ones, if God shines in the midst of the Church, what is to become of you who will not come to Him? (*Joseph Davis.*) *The perfection and beauty of Zion*.—I. THE INTERNAL PERFECTION AND BEAUTY OF ZION. 1. It is because of the indwelling of the Divine presence that we have a Church. 2. Only as God dwells in us individually is it possible for Him to dwell in His Church as a body. 3. The Church of Christ is the aggregate of holy living; the aggregate of simple faith; the aggregate of personal consecration; the aggregate of personal devotion to God and to our fellow-men. II. THE EXTERNAL BEAUTY AND PERFECTION OF ZION, the Church of the redeemed, depends upon the shining forth or manifestation of this indwelling presence of God. Christ's Church is not a dark lantern, but a chandelier with its lights trimmed and burning—a lighthouse. And what a responsibility this wonderful bequest to believers, this marvellous endowment of the Church, carries with it! (*F. M. Ellis, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.**—*Our God shall come*.—I. THE COMING OF OUR GOD. The expression is very striking: "Our God shall come!" Christ is God as well as man. His first coming was in His birth at Bethlehem. Here the psalmist contemplates His second coming. The cry may soon be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," etc. It is of the utmost importance that we should be ready. II. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING. "A fire shall devour," etc. It is impossible to describe the terror of that day! III. THE OBJECT OF HIS COMING. "He shall call," etc. (*R. Horsfall.*) *The silence of God*.—I. CONSIDER THE MARVELLOUS, AND, AS SOME MAY THINK, MYSTERIOUS SILENCE OF GOD DURING THE PRESENT ECONOMY. 1. Rise in the morning, and go forth to look upon the world as the light reveals it to the eye. You see the sun mounting

to his throne of glory, dispensing, as he goes, life and warmth and beauty over all the habitable globe. All nature awakes at his approach. But though there is a very orchestra of subtle sounds—the song of birds, the hum of insect life, the sigh of the swaying pines, the rustle of the dewy leaves—yet nowhere in field or forest, on the green earth or in the deep blue sky, do you hear the voice of the Deity. God keeps silence! 2. Go climb some lofty mountain, until you have the clouds beneath your feet, and the world spread out in grand panorama before you, river and plain, hill and valley, city and hamlet. You seem to breathe the pure air of heaven, and to stand under its cloudless dome. But neither in that blue arch above you, nor among those vast ranges of billowy mountains which encompass you, nor from those yet loftier snow-clad peaks which tower up to heaven, arrayed in their white robes for ever as the high priests of nature, do you hear any whisper or echo of the voice of the invisible God. The cataract thunders in the gorge, the mountain-brook babbles in the valley, the sad sea-waves chant their dirge along the shore, the hoarse thunder reverberates from peak to peak, but God keeps silence. 3. Picture some of the scenes of shameful revelry nightly enacted in such a city as this, when the licence and impiety of Belshazzar's feast are reproduced; when lips that were taught in infancy to lisp the name of God in prayer are made the instruments of ribaldry and blasphemy. Yet no handwriting on the wall rebukes the shameless revellers. God keeps silence! 4. Or, think of the deeds of wickedness daily wrought among men—"man's inhumanity to man," the heartless cruelty with which the strong prey upon the weak, "the oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely," deceit and falsehood, trickery and hypocrisy, wrong and robbery. God keeps silence! II. WHY DOES GOD KEEP SILENCE? 1. A spiritual being cannot be apprehended by the senses. The eye of flesh, the ear of flesh cannot perceive the invisible God. It is the soul which perceives, hears, apprehends Him. Faith in God must remain a moral act; it must be the result of moral considerations, not of the formulas of logic. The stream cannot rise above its source; and belief in God, which should be the result of a logical demonstration, would remain an act of the logical faculties, and would have no moral value. Moreover, if the being and attributes of God were so plainly exhibited in the visible universe as to preclude the possibility of a doubt, a necessary element of man's probation would be wanting. 2. The probationary character of human life. If God's presence and power and retributive justice were forced upon the attention of men, so that they could not escape the consciousness of it; if God's voice were ever sounding in their ears in warning; and if punishment followed swiftly upon transgression—men in that case would act as truly under compulsion as if bound hand and foot, and driven by the whip of the taskmaster. There might be obedience to the Divine law; but it would be enforced obedience, and hence its moral value would be gone. (R. H. McKim, D.D.)

Vers. 4-6. **He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.**—*Nature, a witness against the sinner.*—But she seems, oftentimes, utterly insensible. The most bounteous gifts are bestowed on saint and sinner alike. No matter what outrages on all righteousness and goodness men may be guilty of, she takes no notice. No lightning-bolt leaps forth on the impious head, and the solid earth does not yawn to engulf the perpetrator of iniquity. But, nevertheless, Scripture speaks of Nature as if it were a conscious witness of the moral history of man, as here in our text (cf. also Isa. i. 1; Mic. vi. 1; Deut. xxxi. 28). What is the import of this appeal, in which heaven and earth are called upon to bear record? I. **THE MATERIAL WORLD MAY BE THUS SUMMONED TO WITNESS, AS CONTAINING THE SCENES OF MAN'S CRIMES.** Nature keeps a silent record of them in the associations of the places where they were committed. Bring the sinner to the scene of his past misdeeds, and he will sometimes feel as if all the objects around were endowed with a voice of reproachful reminiscence. How great is the power of local association, whether the deeds done there have been noble or the reverse. There are places on which we wish never to look again because of that of which they remind us. Thus the whole earth may become full of such reminders, and so may be a faithful record to the eye that can read them. II. **BY ITS FULFILLING, IN CONTRAST WITH MAN, THE END OF ITS EXISTENCE.** All things are judged as they answer to the ends for which they were made. How, then, does the material world witness against us. III. **AS AFFORDING PROOF OF THE UNERRING CERTAINTY AND STRICTNESS OF THE DIVINE LAWS.** Their operation



is invisible and uniform; slow, oftentimes, but sure. Only the interposition of a higher law, as in the Redemption of Christ, can save the sinful man. (*John Caird, D.D.*)

**Ver. 5. Gather My saints together unto Me.**—The doctrine of a general judgment and of a final retribution is a doctrine of pure revelation, and is found both in the Old Testament and in the New. But before this judgment shall be issued the command given in our text. **I. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED**—"My saints." How we become saints. 1. By Divine choice. 2. By a Divine change which is the necessary consequence of this choice. 3. Their character is evidenced by their Divine conduct, and—4. By Divine consecration. **II. THE COMMAND ISSUED.** "Gather," etc. Now, God does this—1. In their conversion. 2. In public worship. 3. In times of danger. 4. In the service of His Church, and—5. In death and at the Resurrection. (*J. Sibree.*) "*Gather My saints together unto Me*":—1. What an expressive word—"My saints!" How the Lord appropriates them as His own! (*Mal. iii. 17.*) 2. "Gather My saints." "He shall gather the lambs in His arms." He shall "gather" them as a shepherd his sheep in the hour of weakness and danger. They shall not be weak or nervous then. The frail body shall be dropped for ever. 3. "Gather My saints together." It is the family meeting; it is the grand reunion; it is the glad assembly. We shall not rise to meet the Lord individually—in isolation; we shall be gathered together. What heart does not bound at the thought! 4. "Unto Me." What would that meeting be without Jesus? What is any meeting without Him? (*F. Whitfield, M.A.*) *The gathering of Christ's saints*:—It is the Son of God who is the speaker in this psalm, which tells of His first advent at Jerusalem, and then of His second coming to take vengeance on the disobedient. In that second coming we all shall be deeply interested. Let us think how it will fare with us on that day. Our text refers to it. Consider—**I. THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED.** 1. They are Christ's saints. We are to be a holy people, "without blame before Him in love." How is it with us? 2. They have entered into covenant with God. Abraham (*Gen. xv. 9, etc.*; *Jer. xxxiv. 18.*). See also Noah's sacrifice. And so God's saints now covenant with God through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. **II. THE COMMAND RESPECTING THEM.** 1. They will be gathered together. They are not so now. 2. They will be gathered unto Christ. "Gather . . . unto Me." How blessed this prospect. **III. INFERENCES.** 1. The duty of Christ's ministers—to gather together saints, from sin and the world, by the preaching of the Gospel. Nothing compensates if this be left undone. 2. The privileges of Christ's people. Eternal life in heaven is yours. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *Christ's order for the gathering of His saints*:—This psalm certainly relates to the coming of Christ for judgment (*ver. 3.*). "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." But whether to His first coming, to abolish the ceremonial law, set up the simple Gospel-worship, and to judge, condemn, and take vengeance on the formal, superstitious Jews, destroying their temple, and ruining their kingdom; or to His second coming to judge the world, is a question. I think it is plain it relates to both, the former as an emblem, pledge and type of the other; and thus we find them stated by our Saviour Himself (*Matt. xxiv.*). 1. We have the party in whose name the court is called and held. It is in the name of the Holy Trinity, *Heb.* "God! God! Jehovah; He hath spoken," etc. God will judge the world by the man Christ. 2. The issuing out of the summons to the whole world, called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof; from east to west, from the one end to the other. 3. From whence the Judge sets forth, making His glorious appearance. At the giving of the law He came from Sinai with terrible majesty (*Deut. xxxiii. 2.*). At this His appearance He will come from Zion, the city of the living God, namely, from heaven, the Church being so called as a heaven on earth. 4. His awful coming to the judgment. He is God, as well as man. Devouring fire shall be his harbinger (*2 Thess. i. 8.*). But will any then bid Him welcome? Yes, His people will. 5. Whither the summons shall be directed. To the heavens, where the souls of the blessed are that are dead; to the earth, where the living are, good and bad, and where the bodies of the dead are (*Rev. xx. 13.*). 6. A special gracious order in favour of His people. See text. Now comes the time of setting all to rights with them. And they are further characterized as "those that have made a covenant," etc. From all which we gather these doctrines—1. When Christ comes again to put an end

to this world, and complete the state of the other world, He will publicly own the saints as His own, and they shall be honourably gathered to Him by His order. 2. When Christ comes again, this earth will be very throng, and a wonderful mixture will be in it more than ever at any time before; He having called to heaven, and the other receptacle of departed souls, and brought them all back to their bodies which are in the earth. 3. When Christ comes again He will put an end to this world ere He go. His very first appearance will put an end to the business of it. All trades, employments, and diversions in this world will end for ever. And, ere He leave it, He will put an end to itself by setting it on fire; so that it shall no more be capable of affording a habitation to man or beast; while withal the heavens that cover it shall pass away (2 Pet. iii. 10). 4. Saintship will be the only mark of distinction among men then. (T. Boston, D.D.) *The final saintly gathering*.—I. HERE IS THE CHARACTER OF GOOD MEN. 1. They are saints. By this expression, "My saints," God claims a property in them, and expresseth His care of them and love to them. 2. They have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. They have taken Him to be their God, their ruler and portion; and given up all dependence upon other objects. II. THE COMMAND. "Let it be thy care, O my soul! I have the honour and happiness to be gathered with His people; and to have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This is the main thing; the source of my chief joy. I bless God that I am gathered with His saints, and united to His Church; and that I do not live in the total or general neglect of this sacred institution. I am willing and thankful to be laid under the most solemn engagements to be the Lord's, and often to recollect and renew them. I know that my treacherous heart needs every tie, to bind it more closely to God and its duty. I would come, deeply humbled for past violations of my engagements, and with the renewed exercises of repentance and faith. Lord, I come, to join myself to Thee in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten; with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the great sacrifice, here set forth, as crucified before my eyes." Let us remember what is said of this gathering. They shall all be gathered from all places, the most obscure and the most remote; and brought to the presence of their covenant-God and Father, who will applaud and reward their fidelity. (Job Orton, D.D.) *A covenant with God*.—The psalmist's idea of God, as herein expressed, is broad and spiritual, and indicates high spiritual development. It is an ennobling one for man. To have a covenant with God, to be partner with Him in a bond, is to make us, to a certain extent, equal with Him. Covenant-making is one of the earliest instincts in man, and intrinsically one of the noblest. The bargain-making spirit is not necessarily a low one, nor a selfish one; nor a worldly one. We have degraded it by our use of it, by our desire to over-reach, to get the better of our neighbours in our bargains. The first condition of existence is the establishing of relationship between self, and that which is outside self. During the early years of our life we are largely dependent on others for the fulfilling of that condition for us. When we grow older we realize that for a rich and full and strong life we still are dependent on others, but as they in their turn are also dependent on us, we make covenants with them to fix and regulate the mutual help which we are prepared to render and receive. This covenant-making denotes the recognition, conscious or unconscious, of the incapacity of our own resources to satisfy our own needs and desires. But it indicates also that the true nature of man is not that little portion which he has within himself, but is that great nature, of which each one of us has in himself but a little share. And such is the nature of man, that with all his own resources, and all he can draw from others, he is left still unsatisfied. He craves for a yet fuller life, to be filled out of the infinite nature. This leads us to think of the nature of the covenant between God and man, involving the duty of man. Our part of the agreement is that we sacrifice to God. The only true sacrifice is the one which is prompted by love. Love and sacrifice are a twin growth, and each loses its purity when severed from the other. The act of sacrifice is contemplated oftentimes when we are still in the enjoyment of comfort and peace and light, but the sacrifice itself is carried out when all our comfort has declined, when our peace has been turned into maddest strife, and when the light by which we entered the narrow path of self-surrender has been turned into a darkness deep as death. If we love God, we shall delight in every sacrifice which is a manifestation of love, and we shall rejoice to offer our dearest and best gifts to Him. In poverty and weakness we may now make such offering, but it will continue to complete itself. "And, at last, as the righteous will of man gains the final

victory, as it unites itself in entire acquiescence with the all-righteous will of God, sacrifice will at once be perfected and abolished, immersed in one infinite ocean of joy and love." What we are vitally concerned to know about God is that He is perfectly just, and true, and loving. And this we can never learn from any revelation to our outward senses, but by quick prophetic insight, by the intuition of the Spirit. When we realize that God and man are one in a covenant of eternal life, we shall have incentive sufficient and worthy for all noble effort; for we ourselves shall have then become "sons of God." (*A. H. Moncreu Syme.*)

*The necessity of sacrifice.*—The history of sacrifice is as old as the history of sin: the idea of sacrifice much older. It is part of the inmost counsels of God. It finds its corresponding utterance, with differing degrees of clearness and truth, through all that is holiest, noblest, and most personal of all God's creation. Time, study, thought, enter into every work of art that earns any real fame: and perhaps it is not too much to say that no painter's creation, no sculptor's reproduction of all but life, no burning words of eloquence, no minstrel's strain, no poet's dream, no work of art, ever really touches the heart, kindles deep feeling, directs motives, or influences conduct, if it does not bear on or below its surface the evidence of labour, of travail, of self-devotion, of self-dedication, self-absorption in the object of beauty or of power. And only in proportion as those who look, or admire, or criticize, or are captivated, know the real principles of what they gaze upon, or estimate the suffering they cost, does the popular opinion approximate the true. And hence it is that God's judgment, and God's opinion of people and acts, differ so often and so terribly from ours. He knows on what grounds His professing servants claim to have a covenant with Him: in what manner they act up to their claim. But God is gathering together those with whom He has made a covenant by sacrifice. And why? For judgment. "God is judge Himself." He has a heavy charge against them. They are His. They have made a covenant with Him. But herein is their sin. The first awful charge against them is opened thus: "I am God, even thy God." The only sacrifice they had made had cost them nothing. And this day again God speaks. Again "out of Zion hath God appeared in perfect beauty"; but it is not the beauty of the world; it is "in the beauty of holiness" expressed in sacrifice. He gathers His saints together unto Him: "lifted up" from the earth upon the Cross, He "draws all men unto Him." Standing before the Cross, gathered before God, can we compare our lives with that life of sacrifice? Can we say that we have really rendered to Him that which He knows it is a sacrifice to us to give? (*G. C. Harris, M.A.*)

**Vers. 8-13. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings.—***Lessons.*—"I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;" i. e. for thy neglect of them, but for thy resting in them, sticking in the bark, bringing Me the bare shell without the kernel, not referring to the right end and use, but satisfying thyself in the work done. (*John Trapp.*) *Lifeless duties.*—Go out into the woods, where the white oak is, and where the beech is. Their leaves died last November, but they all hang on the trees yet. The trees have not strength to slough them. They always make me think of a great many people. Sap does not run in them any more, but their duties hang on them like dead leaves all over. They would not like to drop their duties: they are not quite in that state yet; but those duties are dry, sapless and enforced. (*E. P. Thwing.*)

**Ver. 12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof.—***The owner of the world.*—I. THERE MUST BE A GROWING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AMONGST MEN. Men once thought that God could be hungry, and that offerings of wheat, goats, etc., would appease His appetite: but when this psalm was written they had advanced far beyond this in their knowledge of God. And we now have no such idea. Science, learning, and the study of the life of Jesus, have classified and enlarged our ideas of God and God's workings. Then we ought not to be afraid to say, "The teachings of our fathers, the associations of the old theology of creeds must be modified. We must not allow our spiritual life to be controlled by leading strings held in dead hands." We must be ready to stand in the light of the revealed character of God, and accept our impulses and conclusions from that. II. A STATEMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF GOD OVER THE WORLD PROMOTES THAT KNOWLEDGE. How many of those who read inscribed on the portico of the Royal Exchange, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," ever ponder the large meaning of these words. All natural

things are His. How we prize that which is ours—from our first children's toys to our possessions now that we are come to mature age. And because this feeling of ownership is in us we know that it is in God. And not only the things, but the energies in them, are His. And all things that men produce, for they come out of the fulness of God's world. What, then, can He wish for from us but that we come to know Him and to love and honour Him as we should? Therefore remember—(1) All property is held from God. We are but His stewards. (2) Everything in the world is a witness to God. (3) God is the sustainer of all things. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*)

**Ver. 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows.**—*A thanksgiving mode of glorifying God.*—1. "Offer unto God thanksgiving." For what? "In everything give thanks." The propriety of this is seen at once when we consider that we owe everything to God. It is impossible, without a due acknowledgment of this, to appreciate our dependence upon and obligation to Him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." 2. But our text enjoins us "to pay our vows unto the Most High." 3. "And call upon God in the day of trouble." Our fathers had their troubles, and we shall have ours. They may arise from sources anticipated or unanticipated; for the former we may to some degree prepare, or even, perhaps, by prudent forethought and action in some cases prevent; for the latter, we can only patiently wait upon God who sees and knows all things, and with whom is all wisdom and power. No intelligent observer can be unaware of serious dangers that threaten our God-given heritage. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." We think our cherished institutions well guarded in citadels of truth and righteousness, and if all who man the citadels are reliable and faithful, it is certain that no foes without can harm, for the God in whom we trust will never suffer the righteous to be confounded or finally overcome. And we must trust in Him for the protection and defence of all that is right; and we must, if we would be safe and secure, look to Him for wisdom to devise and strength to execute all our purposes in His fear. 4. "And thou shalt glorify Me." Not "make Him glorious," as if to imply that we can add anything to His glory that ever was, is, and ever shall be complete in itself beyond any comparison; but "show forth His glory," by acknowledging it in our hearts, proclaiming it with our lips, exhibiting our regard for it in our lives, and diffusing it all abroad by the exertion of all our ransomed powers and possible energies in His service for the good of all within the range of our influence. For this we were created, for this we are preserved, and when we are told that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we are exhorted "therefore" to "glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are His." (*J. T. Ward, D.D.*) *On thanksgiving.*—Gratitude is a natural principle of the human heart. In every age thanksgiving has been offered. The songs of Zion have been often sung; the altar has blazed before the Creator of the universe, and the temple been filled with the odours of incense. I. CREATION IS A PROPER SUBJECT OF THANKSGIVING. With the beauties of nature you are surrounded on every side. The morning sun and the melody of the groves; the beautiful landscape and the blue sky; the roaring cataract and the spacious ocean; these are free. Untouched with gratitude can mortals behold them? II. THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDENCE DEMAND YOUR THANKSGIVING. Often has health been restored after sickness, and the mind solaced after the depression of sorrow. In some cases, misfortunes have been removed. Yes, calamities have been alleviated. Now, the return of tranquillity to the troubled mind is a blessing unspeakable; and the wounded spirit, which God hath healed, ought surely to praise Him. III. THE BLESSINGS OF HIS GRACE CLAIM YOUR WARMEST GRATITUDE. And, wherever such gratitude exists, it becomes a powerful principle of obedience, leading a pious man to combat every species of corruption, to cultivate every virtue, to maintain rectitude of conduct in every case, and preserve, in short, on all occasions, a careful and conscientious adherence to the commandments of his God. (*T. Laurie.*) *The duty of praise and thanksgiving.*—"Offer unto God thanksgiving." Which that we may do, let us inquire first how we are to understand this command of offering praise and thanksgiving unto God; and then how reasonable it is that we should comply with it. Our inquiry into what is meant here will be very short: for who is there that understands anything of religion but knows that the offering praise and thanks to God implies our having a lively and devout sense of His excellencies and of His benefits; our recollecting them with humility and thankfulness of heart; and our expressing these inward

affections by suitable outward signs; by reverent and lowly postures of body, by songs, and hymns, and spiritual ejaculations; either privately or publicly. Our praise properly terminates in God, on the account of His natural excellencies and perfections; and is that act of devotion by which we confess and admire His several attributes: but thanksgiving is a narrower duty, and imports only a grateful sense and acknowledgment of past mercies. Now, the great reasonableness and obligation of this duty of praise or thanksgiving will appear if we consider it absolutely in itself as the debt of our natures: or compare it with other duties, and then the rank it bears among them; or set out, in the last place, some of its peculiar properties and advantages, which recommend it to the devout performer.

1. It is the most pleasing part of our devotions. It proceeds always from a lively, cheerful temper of mind; and it cherishes and improves what it proceeds from.
2. It is another distinguishing property of Divine praise, that it enlargeth the powers and capacities of our souls; turning them from little and low things, upon their greatest and noblest objects, the Divine nature; and employing them in the discovery and admiration of those several perfections that adorn it.
3. It farther promotes in us an exquisite sense of God's honour, and an high indignation of mind at everything that openly profanes it.
4. It will work in us a deep humility and consciousness of our own imperfections.
5. A conscientious praise of God will keep us back from all false and mean praises, all fulsome and servile flatteries, such as are in use among men. (*Bishop Atterbury.*) *Thanksgiving due to God alone*.—A lady applied to an eminent philanthropist of Bristol, Richard Reynolds, on behalf of a little orphan boy. After he had given liberally, she said, "When he is old enough I will teach him to name and thank his benefactor." "Stop," said the good man; "thou art mistaken. We do not thank the clouds for rain. Teach him to look higher, and thank Him who giveth both the clouds and the rain."

Ver. 15. *Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.*—*The true deliverance*.—Many an one, in the day of trouble, has called on God even with an exceeding bitter cry, and yet has found no deliverance. The "cloudy and dark day" has continued full of a gloom, which no light from heaven has broken through to relieve. The blow which we dreaded, and which we prayed might not fall, has fallen. But need our faith fail, so that we shall refuse any more to rely on God's promise again? Can there be any real ground for that? It would be awful if there were; if we had to think of God, as we too often have to think of men, as not to be depended on, not to be trusted to make good His word. It would be almost better to be Atheists than to think that. But the solution of the difficulty is in the fact that what God means by "deliverance" is other than what we mean. We are asking for one thing when He means another. And perhaps, also, we misunderstand God when He says, "Call upon Me." Do we not too often take it to mean that when we see no other help, then we should call on God for there is nothing else to be done? Is not this too much our idea; and is it a just idea? Have we any right to treat God in that way? to neglect Him and forget Him till we are in trouble, and then to call aloud on Him, simply to remove the trouble? I do not think we can interpret God's Word as meaning that He will answer such a call by such a deliverance. He means that the trouble is to do the work which He desires it should; to lead us to Him, to break in upon our worldliness, self-sufficiency, and forgetfulness of our dependence on Him, and to help us to receive the blessing it is meant to bestow, so that through it we may be delivered, not necessarily from it, but from the evils which it was intended to correct, from the dangers against which it was the warning. A man, for instance, who had wilfully committed a crime and been visited with the punishment of his crime, might feel so touched in heart and so distressed in mind, as to be led to the thought of God, and to cry to God for deliverance; but could he expect God to open his prison door and let him go free, or to pay his fine and let him off without a penalty? Would that be indeed a "deliverance" to him? Would not the only real deliverance be a deliverance from the evil heart and unrighteous spirit which led him to commit the crime; and would not the outward trouble, from which God did not deliver him, be doing its proper work, if through God's grace it was the means of delivering him from that evil heart and that unrighteous spirit? If it did that, could he say God had not heard his cry or wrought deliverance for him? (*R. H. Story, D.D.*) *Encouragement for the pious in the day of trial*.—I. THE SPEAKER. "The mighty God;"

possessing—1. Boundless knowledge (Heb. iv. 13; Acts x. 5, 6; Matt. x. 30). 2. Infinite goodness (Ps. cxlv. 9; ciii. 13; cxlvii. 11). 3. Omnipotent power (Ps. cxlviii. 6). II. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. 1. Those who fear and love God (1 Cor. iii. 21-23). 2. Those who are subjects of trial (Heb. xii. 6, 10). III. THE DUTY SUGGESTED. "Call upon Me." 1. Humility. 2. Sincerity. 3. Confidence. 4. Consistency. 5. Importunity. IV. THE DECLARATION MADE. "I will deliver thee." 1. At what time He sees best. 2. In what way He sees best. 3. By what means He sees best. V. THE GRATEFUL RETURNS REQUIRED. "And thou shalt glorify Me." 1. By a devout acknowledgment of the Divine goodness (Ps. xxxiv. 1-4). Be careful not to ascribe that to human agency which is immediately the work of God. 2. By unreserved devotedness to Him (Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20). 3. By promoting His interests—your time, talents, influence employed for God. Present them through the merits of Christ. VI. IMPROVEMENT. 1. To those who love and fear God. How blessed is your state! The Lord is your God, call upon Him. 2. To those who are humbly seeking God (Matt. xi. 28). 3. To those who are living without God. How awful your state! (Rom. ii. 5). (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) For the day of trouble:—I. THE DAY. "Day of trouble." 1. All know more or less of this "day"—morning, noon, or eventide of it, or the whole "day." 2. Trouble various: (1) Business trouble—competition—dishonest traders—bad times, etc. (2) Domestic trouble—family cares—sick child—wayward son or daughter—poverty. (3) Soul-trouble—sins realized—conscience accusing—unworthiness and imperfections—doubts and fears, etc. 3. Only a "day" not a week—month—year, etc. II. THE REQUEST. "Call upon Me." Friends generally plentiful in prosperity, scarce in trouble. God wants us to come particularly then. Take your prayer-cheques and faith-orders to His Bank, and so ask and receive that your joy may be full. This the Divine cure for trouble. Don't worry—chafe—fret—despair; simply give Him a "call"—He is always at home, etc. III. THE PROMISE. "I will deliver thee." Infinite ability and willingness—power and love—are at the back of this promise. None ever called aright and were refused. Noah, David, Daniel, etc., cried and were delivered. IV. THE RESULT. "Thou shalt glorify Me." 1. By presenting praise (ver 23). 2. By publishing His fame—gratitude will constrain to this. 3. By trusting implicitly at all times. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Robinson Crusoe's text*:—One book charmed us all in the days of our youth. Is there a boy alive who has not read it? I am not ashamed to confess that I can read it even now with ever fresh delight. You remember how Robinson Crusoe was wrecked. He is left in the desert island all alone. He is smitten with fever. He is ready to perish. Now he begins to think, and opens a Bible which he finds in his chest, and he lights upon this passage. That night he prayed for the first time in his life. It is a text which I would have written in stars across the sky, or sounded forth with trumpet at noon from the top of every tower. Observe—I. REALISM IS PREFERRED TO RITUALISM. Note the content. How this is so. 1. Because there is meaning in it. There is none in ritualism when grace is absent. But when you call upon God in the day of trouble there is meaning, and God understands, and cares for it when all the pomp and show, and the gorgeousness of ritual are to Him as nothing. 2. There is spirituality in it, and worship in spirit and in truth is what God would have. 3. It recognizes God as the living God. 4. It is sincere. In prosperity we are apt to forget our prayers. Too many of us are like boys' tops, that cease to spin except they are whipped. Certainly trouble gives intensity to prayer. 5. It is humble. Too often we are over-satisfied with our own performances in the way of worship, but when in deep trouble the soul bows down then. 6. And there is a measure of faith in such prayers. When faith does, as it were, only cross over the field of the camera, so that across the photograph there is a dim trace of its having been there, God can spy it out, and He can and will accept prayer for the sake of that little faith. Next we have—II. ADVERSITY TURNED TO ADVANTAGE. God cannot deliver a man who is not in trouble: even Jesus Christ cannot heal a man who is not sick. Now, if you be in trouble, you have—1. A plea from the time. This is the day of trouble. Your case is urgent. 2. From the trouble itself. It is so great. 3. From the command. God bids you pray. 4. From His own character—so great, so good. III. FREE GRACE LAID UNDER BONDS. "I will deliver thee;" thus God pledges Himself. The text is unconditional as to the persons. And God's "I will" includes all needful power which may be needed for deliverance. But we are not told exactly when God will do this. You are in a great hurry, but the Lord is not. When the gold is

cast into the fining-pot, there it must stay till the dross is purged away. But promptitude is implied. He will deliver you in the best possible time. IV. GOD AND THE PRAYING MAN TAKING SHARES. Here is your share, "Call upon Me"; here is God's share, "I will deliver." Again, here is yours, You shall be delivered; and then, again, it is the Lord's turn, "Thou shalt glorify Me." Here is a delightful partnership. Who would demur to these terms? If God will pardon and justify us, adopt and sanctify us, and bring us home to heaven at last, shall He not have the glory of it? Even some divines will give man a little of the glory. Oh, that Dagon of a free will! How men will worship it! Go out henceforth, you saved ones, and tell what the Lord has done for you. An aged woman once said that if the Lord Jesus Christ really did save her, He should never hear the last of it. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Prayer to God in trouble an acceptable sacrifice*:—God here reproves Israel not for keeping back from Him abundant ceremonial service—they were not at fault there—but for not rendering Him the worship of the heart. That was what He desired more than all burnt offering and sacrifice. And the reasons of God's preference are evident. FOR—I. IT BRINGS GLORY TO HIM IN ITSELF. 1. It shows that God is a reality to the man. 2. There is spiritual intercourse in it. How easy it is to say a prayer without coming into contact with God! Year after year the tongue repeats pious language, as a barrel organ grinds out the old tunes, and there may be no more converse with the Lord than if the man had muttered to the ghosts of the slain. Many prayers might as well be said backward as forwards, for there would be as much in them one way as the other. The abracadabra of the magician has quite as much virtue in it as any other set of mere words. 3. It is filled with a manifest hope in God. 4. It exhibits a clinging affection to Him, and—5. A most stedfast confidence. Therefore is it that such prayer brings glory to God. II. ALSO, THROUGH THE ANSWER WHICH IT WINS. The answer is personal, positive, practical, permanent. III. AND THE LORD WILL BE GLORIFIED IN YOUR CONDUCT AFTERWARDS. Adoration, gratitude, trust, patience, a consecrated life. It is by the sharp needle of sorrow that we are embroidered with the praises of the Lord. The brightest of the saints owe much of their clearness to the fire and the file. We must be tried that the Lord may be glorified. (*Ibid.*) *Our only deliverance*:—I. THE DUTY ENJOINED. "Call upon Me," etc. This bears fully upon our present circumstances (2 Chron. vii. 13, 14). The word "call" implies—1. Earnestness of heart. 2. Faith, which realizes both God's truth and God's grace. 3. Expectation. II. THE PROMISE GIVEN—"I will deliver thee." Who else can? Medical science seems of but little avail. But God can (Rev. vii.). The command to the angel of penitence; and 2 Sam., last chapter. All show that the Lord can limit the powers of evil. Let us remember the love of God—His presenting, forbearing, redeeming, sanctifying love. III. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Acknowledge God's hand in this affliction. 2. Do not exaggerate it. 3. Do not neglect it. Humble yourselves and help the poor. (*H. Montagu Villiers, M.A.*) *The Christian's duty in the day of trouble*:—What an encouraging character does this psalm give us of the religion He would see in us. He represents it as consisting chiefly in thanksgiving and prayer. I. A COMMAND FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. They are represented as in trouble. There is "a day of trouble," it is intimated, either come on them or coming. And it is a touching circumstance, that whoever else may overlook our troubles, the Lord does not. Call upon Me in the day of trouble. Afflicted souls should pray more and oftener, and to bring us to this is the design of trouble, and when we are brought thus to pray, it is one of the very best evidences that our trouble has been blessed to us. One thing more we must add—the Lord will assuredly bring all His troubled people to this, this calling upon Him. He will knock away their props from under them, or He will wither their strength, or He will add more and more to their burden; in some way He will make them feel that they cannot possibly stand without Him (Ps. cvii.). II. A GRACIOUS PROMISE THE LORD GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE. "I will deliver thee." This means—1. Deliverance in trouble; or—2. From trouble. III. THE HAPPY EFFECT WHICH IS TO FOLLOW—"Thou shalt glorify Me." And this will be both in and after our trouble. The believer ever recognizes God's hand in such deliverance, and therefore glorifies Him. Let us all turn to God now, so that we may be able to turn to Him when trouble comes. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The day of trouble*:—Why not "deliver" without calling? He knows the sorrow and need of His people, and if it be in His heart to "deliver," why wait to be "called upon"? When a man is in "trouble," and his neighbours help him out, he is

not in much danger of confounding his benefactor with himself, or of questioning, after all, if the deliverance did not come in some other way. But if God delivered men without being "called upon," they would soon become rationalistic, in their way of looking at things, and not only account for "the day of trouble," but also for their "deliverance," upon the mere principles of reason or natural law. It is the calling spirit which He seeks to evoke—the spirit which recognizes Him as the only "deliverer" of His people. I. **THE TIME.** "The day of trouble" does not appear to be governed, as is our natural day, by planetary revolutions, or the swing of the pendulum. It may come at any hour, and may stay long after the natural day is done. II. **THE REQUEST.** "Call upon Me." 1. Humbly. 2. Believingly, etc. III. **THE PROMISE.** "I will deliver thee." God can always repeat Himself; He can always "deliver" more gloriously the next time you "call upon Him," if you only honour Him by asking, and believing that He will. IV. **THE RESULT.** "Thou shalt glorify Me." 1. By our faith. 2. By gratitude. 3. By obedience. 4. By testifying of His goodness. 5. By devotion to His cause. 6. By praising Him. (T. Kelly.)

Vers. 16–23. **But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes?**—*The mere formalist and the spiritualist in religion.*—I. **THE MERE FORMALISTS** in religion. 1. They are religiously active—often very busy in preaching and praying. The less heart in religion, generally the more hand; the less vitality, the more voice. 2. They are morally wicked. (1) No desire for knowledge. (2) No reverence for God's Word. (3) No practical regard for the rights of society. Religious formality crucified the Son of God Himself. Religious form without the genuine spirit is law without justice—a tyranny; language without truth—a deception; an atmosphere without oxygen—a poison. 3. They are God-degrading. The God of the formalist is fashioned after his own character. 4. They are Divinely threatened. (1) With a terrible conviction of their own guilt (ver. 21). What calamity can be greater, than for a sinner to have all his sins, in all their awful enormity, brought before the eye of his conscience; brought into contact with all the tenderest and profoundest sensibilities of his moral being? (2) With an irremediable destruction (ver. 22). The language here is derived from a ravenous beast, tearing its victim limb from limb. "None to deliver." "I called, and ye refused," etc. II. **THE TRUE SPIRITUALIST** in religion (ver. 23, etc.). 1. He worships God acceptably. The sentiments of gratitude, reverence, adoration, that rise out of his regenerated heart are the praise that is well-pleasing to God. 2. He lives an upright life. He walks in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless. 3. He secures the true salvation—from all ignorance, error, selfishness, sin, and sorrow. (*Homilist.*) *The inconsistency, absurdity, and sin of professing religion without a corresponding conduct.*—By their talking of the statutes of Jehovah, and having His covenant in their mouths, the psalmist must have intended to denote their religious profession and hopes as Jews. They are men of an unteachable disposition and an untractable temper, rendered, by their vices, averse to religious and moral instruction. So far from attending to the Mosaic revelation, and consulting it as containing the proper rules for the regulation of their conduct, they, in fact, entirely neglected it; they treated it as persons do any worthless thing, which they throw from them with disdain. I. **THE EXPECTATIONS AND HOPES OF THOSE, WHOSE CHARACTERS HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED, AND WHO ARE HERE REPRESENTED AS WICKED, MUST BE VAIN AND DELUSIVE.** For the rewards annexed to any law are, certainly, intended to enforce its precepts, and to induce men, from the additional motive of interest, to practise their duty. To consider them in a different light is absurdly supposing the law to be constructed in such a manner as to counteract itself, and to destroy its own authority and influence. If it argued the highest presumption and folly to hope for the benefits and blessings of the Mosaic covenant, although the condition of "observing all the commandment of the law to do them" were not complied with, then, to retain these hopes, even while the prohibitions and threatenings of the law stood in full force against them, was certainly, of all others, the most unaccountable instance of infatuation. II. **HOW FAR THE ADDRESS IN THE TEXT MAY, WITH EQUAL PROPRIETY AND JUSTICE, BE APPLICABLE TO ANY, WHO LIVE IN THE PRESENT TIMES, WHO ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND WHO PROFESS TO BE THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.** If we entertain hopes of enjoying the blessings which the Gospel proposes to mankind, while, at the same time, our characters correspond with those described in the text, our profession, when compared with theirs, will



be found equally insincere, inconsistent, and contradictory: our hopes, too, will prove to be equally presumptuous and vain. We, indeed, shall be more inexcusably foolish and absurd; because a subsequent revelation, wherever it agrees with the former, should certainly be considered as an additional confirmation of it. Every renewal of its prohibitions reminds us, in a stronger manner, of the offensive nature and dangerous consequences of the particular vices already forbidden. But, alas! how many are there who profess to receive the Gospel that are very impatient of religious and moral discipline! How many are there who sanguinely hope for the salvation which the Gospel offers, and yet knowingly live in direct opposition to its most sacred and important commands, with which alone this salvation stands connected! (A. R. Beard.)

Ver. 21. **These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.**—*The silence of God:*—I. DIVINE SILENCE MAINTAINED. He does indeed speak to you by the eloquence of creation; by the kind lips of providence; by His own inspired Word, warning, inviting, entreating and persuading you to seek Christ. But he does not speak to you in the same startling way now as He will speak to you in the world to come. His present silence is a proof of His long-suffering. He is not willing that any of us should perish. He is anxious that we should all come to repentance. How wrong, therefore, is it for any to abuse this silence! II. DIVINE SILENCE BROKEN. The forbearance of God only encouraged the Jews in their rebellious conduct. At length the Lord made the Roman armies the instruments of His correction. He then indeed "reproved" them, and "showed them the things they had done," in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory. And what God then did towards the impenitent Jews He will hereafter do to all who lived and died in sin. III. APPLICATION. 1. The duty of mutual forbearance. 2. The blessedness of cheerful resignation. (C. Clayton, M.A.) *God's silence:*—In this psalm we have a graphic representation of a court of justice: the judge, the court-house, the guards, the criminals. The accusations are of two kinds. Some are arraigned for formalism; others for grievous crimes. It is in connection with these that God says, "I kept silence." Concerning the silences of God, there is that which is—I. THE EFFECT OF HIS PATIENCE. He is slow to anger, but this silence will not be for ever. Our duty is told in (Rom. ii. 4). II. A JUDICIAL INFLECTION. See Saul, whom God "answered no more." Ephraim was "let alone." Christ silent before Herod. And so with hardened sinners now. Let us pray, "Be not silent unto me, O God, but," etc. III. THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS WISDOM. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God." We are to trust when we cannot understand. IV. A TEMPORARY DISCIPLINE. His children wander, and God hides His face to lead them to repent. The power of silence is very great. "Be still, and know that I am God." "Aaron held his peace." (W. G. Lewis.) *The Creator and the Son of Man:*—I. GOD FULLY OBSERVES THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SIN. This evident—1. From His nature (Ps. cxxxix.). 2. From the declaration of the Bible (Ps. xciv. 9-11). 3. From the universal consciousness of sinners: they feel that God knows their sins. 4. From the retribution that has overtaken sinners even in this world. II. FOR A TIME HE FORBEARS WITH THE ENORMITY OF HUMAN SIN. "I kept silence." 1. The spiritual improvement of humanity requires this, and—2. The mediation of Christ explains it. III. HE THOROUGHLY UNDERSTANDS THE REASON OF HUMAN SIN. "Thou thoughtest," etc. 1. Sinners act as if they could conceal their sins from God as from man. 2. As if God thinks lightly of sin, or that time will make him, as it makes men, forget sin. IV. HE WILL ASSUREDLY AWARD PUNISHMENT FOR HUMAN SIN. Cf. Ecc. viii. 11-13. In that day God will set man's sins in order. 1. As to their real character. 2. Their terrible influence. 3. Their true desert. Sin, therefore, must either be punished or pardoned, as it can be in Christ. (David Thomas, D.D.) *The forbearance of God:*—It is true God keeps silence. We might expect as soon as the sin is committed, as soon as the lie has passed the lips, or while it is trembling on the tongue, the lightning flash of God would strike him down dead, or when the false oath is uttered, that God would make His thunderbolt strike the wretch to the dust! "He is not a man," and therefore His are not the ways of man. Oh! the power of the silence of the omnipotent and infinite God, who could in a moment smite to ruin, to atoms, to annihilation the universe He has called into being, and yet poor, wicked, foolish worms dare to dash themselves "upon the thick bosses of His buckler," and to rush on in sin and iniquity as a war-horse rushes into battle. But the day is coming—"God has appointed a day in the

which He will judge the world;" and that day, that hour no one knoweth; and yet there is the day, there is the hour, therefore God says—and this is the issue of such sad misconstruction, if persevered in—"I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Some He sets them before in darkness and despair. I have seen a few such cases, and they are terrible to witness, when a man awakes up to see the catalogue of his sins and he has no hope, but is given up to despair, and is abandoned by God; then a man has a foretaste of "the worm that never dieth." What must it be to have them set before us when it is too late? Oh! what a dark panorama of eternity passes before the mind, when, in the lurid light of eternity, a man reads the dread catalogue! Then turn to the Lord, now. (*Hugh Stowell, M.A.*) *God keeping and breaking silence*:—I. GOD'S KEEPING SILENCE. Now, our God is Jesus Christ. And, therefore, if we judge of what He will do by what He has done, this silence was to be expected from Him. It is all of a piece with His conduct while upon earth. After the Divine intelligence which our Lord showed when He was twelve years of age, we read nothing more about Him until He was thirty. Many things must have gone on around Him which pained Him, and stirred within Him His zeal for His Father's honour; but the time was not yet come for Him to take notice of them. Now, what does such keeping silence mean? 1. That He seems to take no notice of the wickedness of men. It does often seem so. How many persons daily bring themselves by drunkenness and other shameful vices to a level lower than that of the beasts that perish! How are the poor ground down by their employers, as if those employers had a property in their flesh and sinews; nay, in their very life! How are God's Sabbaths broken continually, the Sunday being spent by many thousands among us, at best in perfect idleness, and at worst in a state of sottishness and stupidity! "Shall not I visit for these things? saith the Lord." And yet He holds His hand for the present, and merely stands by, looking on. 2. Another meaning of God's keeping silence is, that He does not now-a-days interfere with the order of nature. He lets things take their course, in heaven and earth. This was not so in the olden time, of which the Bible tells us. We read of miracles, that is, of changes of the order of nature, both in the New Testament and in the Old. But miracles are only for a season; and it is not in reason that they should be otherwise. When God had some new tidings to tell to the world, which they could not have found out by their own sense and wit, He gave to the men whom He sent with the message the power of working miracles. The miracles were a sort of bell which they rung in the ears of their generation, that people might listen to what they had to say, and believe that it came from heaven. 3. But since we know God to be grievously displeased with sin, there is something awful in His keeping silence while it is committed under His eye. If a child comes home conscious of having offended a parent, and the parent says nothing all that night, but merely looks very grave, the child is more frightened than he would be by a sharp rebuke or severe punishment; for if such rebuke or punishment were inflicted, he would, at least, know the worst; but when the parent is silent he knows not what may be hanging over him. In countries where earthquakes happen, a dead silence always goes before the earthquake. Nature seems hushed into an awful stillness, as if she were holding her breath at the thought of the coming disaster. So it is with God's silence. It will be followed, when it seems deepest, by the earthquake of His judgments. And so the holy apostle writes to the Thessalonians: "When they shall say Peace and safety" (from the fact of God's being so still and so dumb), "then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." II. GOD'S BREAKING SILENCE. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence." We have seen that there was a great blaze of miracles when the Jewish dispensation was first set up, when Israel was called out of Egypt, and settled in the Holy Land. After they were fairly settled, God, for a long time, kept silence. And the silence waxed deeper and deeper, when the people were restored to their own lands after the Babylonish captivity, until at length His judgment came in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the break-up of Israel's national life. Josephus has some wonderful statements about that awful time. Now, so will it be with the Christian Church. At the first there was a blaze of miracles, as with Israel, but ever since God has been keeping silence: God never interferes, so men think and say. Now, one day, when these men are crying, "Peace and safety," God will confound them by breaking silence. When our Lord comes the second time to earth, a far brighter blaze of miracles will shine around Him than that which

ushered in His first appearance. The whole frame of nature will be rent in twain, as the veil of the temple formerly was, and we shall get a glimpse through the great cleft into the world of spirits; we shall see those things which here we have been called upon to believe without seeing—an innumerable company of angels, and a great white throne prepared for judgment, and Him who sitteth thereon. Examine your hearts as to whether you are among those who, when the Lord is thus manifested, will love His appearing? Is there no cherished sin, no darling lust, which you would dread above all things to have dragged into the light of His countenance, and laid naked and open under his eye? (*Dean Goulburn.*)

*Abuse of the long-suffering of God:*—I. **HOW THE LONG-SUFFERING OR "SILENCE" OF GOD OUGHT TO BE INTERPRETED.** Its perversion and abuse are most unnatural. This will be seen when we consider the principles on which God bases this administration. They are—1. The appointment of a state of moral exercise and probation. Sudden punishment would render this impossible. 2. That we may see the evil of sin in itself as well as in its punishment. This also requires time. 3. That He may honour the sacrifice and intercession of His Son. 4. That He may manifest His love in seeking our recovery. II. **THE CORRUPT PERVERSION OF THIS DOCTRINE BY SINFUL MAN.** They think that God is like themselves. 1. Most men live in a state of almost total indifference to their actions; they are in almost entire ignorance both of God and of themselves. 2. Others are unbelievers, infidels. 3. Others take partial views of sin, and, so long as external morality and the ordinary law be not violated, they see no reason for penalty. 4. Religious formalists, who think that God is pleased with mere ceremonies and outward things. III. **THE FATAL RESULT OF ALL THIS.** "I will reprove thee, and," etc. Our sins shall be arrayed—1. In their number. 2. In full light (Ps. xc. 8). 3. As connected with their root, in the heart. 4. In their relations, for sins are related to each other. (*R. Watson.*) **Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.**—*Ideas of God:*—I. **THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF THE HUMAN MIND IS TO THINK OF GOD'S NATURE AS CORRESPONDING IN SOME WAY WITH THAT OF MAN.** The anthropomorphic representations of God in the Bible appeal to this natural disposition of the human mind. Made originally in the image of God, we naturally think Him the image of ourselves. II. **THE EXERCISE OF THIS TENDENCY PLUNGES THE HUMAN MIND INTO EGREGIOUS ERRORS.** 1. The savage's ideal of his God is like himself—vengeful, cruel, destructive. As nations get civilized and refined, they associate corresponding passions to their own with their representations of the deities they worship—e.g. Greece and Rome. A theologian with an arbitrary and iron disposition will speak and write of God as Sovereign—arbitrary and inexorable. A theologian with a tender and benevolent disposition will write and speak of God as a gracious Father, full of pity and love. 2. We need to be on our guard; we have elements and materials for our conception of God (1) in our own consciousness, (2) in the works of nature, and (3) in the written Word; but all will be an apocrypha and not an apocalypse, without the light that comes along the pathway of intelligent obedience and unwavering faith. III. **THIS TENDENCY IS THE SHADOW OF A GLORIOUS FACT THAT HAS OCCURRED IN THE HISTORY OF OUR WORLD.** In the Incarnation God took upon Himself the likeness of man, but He did not become altogether like unto ourselves. Christ was superior to the highest and best of men—unique, incomparable in purity and power. (*F. W. Brown.*)

*Man's conception of God:*—1. The state of a man makes his thought, and this thought has its influence on the present life and its prospects. Idolatry has its fictions of God, which are frauds upon men, who sink Him into grosser and more bestial forms. Superstition knows the same perversity, ascribing to God thoughts and practices that are unworthy His nature, concocted in a morbid imagination; as unreal as a system of belief would be which recorded your conceptions of men or your Maker formed in sleep while suffering from the nightmare. There is a tendency and habit of weakness to form God weak-minded; of cruelty to conceive of Him as cruel. To the pure He is pure, and to the froward, froward. To the prurient all is impure, and to the fraudulent all is deceit. The mummeries of worship, the follies of priestcraft, futile prevarications, cunning compromises and the stratagems of love and of war show this same fact in human life. Now transfer this lesson to the facts of another world. 2. Dire retribution may arise by simple reproduction! Keep the Word closed and every line and letter of your creed hidden, and look out over the face of the earth. You see various forms of animal life below, but none above, man. Before a closed Bible and a silenced Gospel what precludes the prospect that human life is to go to lower and yet lower

grades according to its bent and bias? You see the loftiest summit rise from the plain and from among the uplands; and you see it steadily crumble and fall lower. What is there more congruous than the notion of transmigration? If there be e-volution, there surely is de-volution, a degradation of species. Nature teaches it. The spirit of man goeth—where? That of the brute—where? With the Bible closed we cannot answer. If there be no Gospel, no Heaven, no hell, no resurrection, no redemption, still there is no proof that there is no future. If you do not go upward, you do not prove that there is no downward. What is your hope? Where is your God? Is He a deceiver and the world full of illusions, with no relief, no redress, no rescue, no resurrection and nothing of us to be? Is your God fate? If so, hell, as men have printed it, is but a trifle to what is now already; just as when the merciless breakers dash the drowning man in their seething, swirling eddies, the glare of the volcano in the distance or a raging conflagration is nothing; just as the news of the burning of all his property is nothing to one about to swing from the gibbet. What is your God? Will He be what you make Him now? He is not what unbelief represents Him to be, but He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Open now the Bible, build your altar, bind the sacrifice! Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace, for this is life eternal to know Him! (*H. S. Carpenter, D.D.*) *We see as we are—in God:*—Some one has said, In the beginning of Scripture we read that God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; and, all through history, man has been saying, "Let us make God in our image, after our likeness." How apt the observation is, let the gods many of paganism, and the gods many of Christianity, testify. Men see as they are, and not otherwise. 1. What does the suspicious, distrustful person make God to be? He projects upon the Divine character his own character; and suspicion must therefore be a leading feature in the character of his deity. His God is a suspicious being, never trusting His creatures, but always distrusting them, and the suspicious deity has no friends. 2. What is the God of the selfish man like? His religion must be simply a branch of his selfishness—a thing of "all take" and "no give." Can his God be the God who "so loved the world," etc., and whose better blessedness it is to give rather than to receive? 3. What is the God of the hard, unforgiving man? A stern Shylock, for ever unbending as adamant, in his clamour for "the pound of flesh." Without a moment's hesitation, and without a thrill of pity, he can consign his best friend to a hopeless future, and think he glorifies the Divine justice thereby. Pity the man who can be content with such a conception of God. 4. What about the God of the superstitious? His God is perpetually his foe, and never his friend. He cannot help being a slave, in the service of such a deity. His one ambition is to appease His wrath, or court His favour. He must keep on good terms with a God so vengeful, that he may escape the punishment and receive the reward. 5. A grand, gentlemanly deity is the God of the mammon-worshipper. Majesty and dignity are in His every step. Almightyness encompasses His way. Marvellous display, imposing grandeur impresses His devotees. His robe—the rainbow; His crown—a circlet of stars; His chariot—the wind; His horses—the fiery coursers of the sun. What more magnificent and effective than such a God! But nothing attractive, nothing loveable about Him. 6. Contrast with these the God of the Gospels—the God of the simple, true and pure heart. His God is the good shepherd following the lost sheep out into the wilderness, the wise husbandman refusing to rush in wildly to pluck up the tares which an enemy hath sown in his wheat field, the yearning parent going out eagerly to meet the returning prodigal and anticipating his penitence and his pleading in the glorious glow of his merciful joy. These are the very highest attributes, of the highest and fairest earth has ever seen. These are some of the lights of the Exalted One in whom all fulness dwells. So the simple Christian clothes his God in that garment of salvation, and he walks side by side with Him on the earth, in the spirit of Him who said, "I and the Father are One." (*J. E. Hill, B.D.*) **I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.**—*Conviction of sin:*—It is possible to misinterpret the moral government of God, and many do so. It seems to some as if the world were so arranged as to offer facilities for sin. For sin is rampant everywhere, and yet God seems to take no notice, He does not interfere to prevent or to chastise. Now, if we let crime and wrong pass unproved, our moral sensibilities become deadened, and we become culpably indifferent to the just principles of righteousness. On the other hand, if a man's sense of right is strong, and his moral sensibilities properly quick, he will not be able to control the expression of

his resentment against what is an outrage on common decency or justice. But since God sees far worse things and more of them than any man can see, and yet does not intervene, we are apt practically to form some very false conclusions about His character, though few would have the temerity to state them. We feel as if God could not think so very seriously of sin when He contemplates it with such composure. Surely if sin were so very terrible an evil its consequences would be more apparent; it does not seem such a very appalling or abhorrent thing to us, and apparently neither does it seem so to God. And this is because men misunderstand and misinterpret the majestic silence of God. "I kept silence"—this has been God's rule, and upon it men presume. To guard against this let us seek to have a true view of this characteristic of the Divine government. Why does God keep silence, and show Himself patient as well as strong, although He be provoked every day? Not because He is indifferent to sin, and not because He does not intend to punish it, but because He has ordained certain conditions for our probation here, and He is not so inconsistent as to reverse them. Man was created by God in His own image, in this respect above all others, that he possessed from the first a power of independent volition, a capacity of free-will, by the right and dutiful exercise of which he was to be raised to his proper destiny, and fitted to share the glories of the Divine Being. Man, therefore, must not be forced to act rightly. If a highwayman demands your money with a pistol at your ear, you may exercise your will in handing him your purse, but it is hardly a free will. If an officer of justice catches you when you were just preparing to appropriate your neighbour's property, your will may decide in this instance to be honest, but it is hardly a free will. And so God keeps silence, lets men do as they like, not coercing them by prompt penalty every time they transgress. How solemn and impressive is this silence of God. Slight natures may easily be stirred and goaded into frenzy, but it takes much more to awaken those of a grave and resolute character. But when such are moved, then their indignation is terrible. A silent God is not to be despised and trifled with. And lest His silence should mislead us, He does on rare occasions break His rule of silence. And because this is so unusual it is all the more impressive. A gentleman came up to me in the streets of Liverpool a few years ago, and told me of an incident in my dear father's ministry, of which he was an eye-witness, many years before. "Your father," said he, "was preaching on a then vacant spot of ground near where St. George's Hall now stands. Directly opposite the place where he was standing an ungodly publican, finding his business interfered with, came out, and endeavoured to interrupt the proceedings, mimicking the preacher's manner and gestures, and using very horrible language. I remember," said the gentleman, "how solemnly your dear father turned round upon him and said, 'Take care, my friend, it is not me, but my Master that you are mocking, and remember you cannot mock God with impunity; take care lest you draw down upon your head His just vengeance.' He afterwards announced that he would preach in the same spot the next Sunday afternoon, which he did; and as he gave out his text, you may imagine the feeling of awe that settled down upon the crowd as they saw a hearer draw up to the door of the public-house to carry away the corpse of that very man who one short week before had been defying God and insulting His messenger." Why are such things allowed from time to time to happen? Because God has made a mistake in keeping silence? Nay, verily; but because He sees it necessary from time to time to remind us that, though silent, He is not blind, and though self-controlled, He is not unconcerned. Now, the curse which came on the world when Adam sinned, and afterwards the flood, and chief of all the death of our Lord Jesus Christ—these are three stupendous facts in human history in which we may say, God has broken silence. The cross of Calvary is God's reproof to a world, and from that cross there sounds forth through all time the admonition, "Now consider this, ye that forget God." And God has sent His Holy Spirit especially to carry on this work of reproof, and when He lays hold upon us it soon comes to pass that there is nothing left in our past life that we can bear to look upon. We begin to see ourselves as God sees us, and therefore we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. In one way or other these solemn words of God will be fulfilled, "I will reprove thee, and set before thee in order the things that thou hast done." Ere yet that terrible reproof "break your heart," and the thunder of God's voice shake the ground from under your feet, and leave you sinking in despair, yield to the gentler tones of His convicting mercy. Confess yourself a guilty, ruined sinner, and claim that pardon which shall cancel

the record that is against you, and "purge your mortal archives." (W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.) *The sinner's mistakes exposed and reprov'd*.—I. THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD TREATS IMPENITENT SINNERS DURING THE PRESENT LIFE. He is continually speaking to them in His Word, inviting, counselling and warning them to repent and flee from the wrath to come; nor does he fail often to speak to them in the same manner, by the voice of conscience. But, as a Judge, he usually observes the most profound silence. If it be asked, why God thus keeps silence; I answer, because this life is a season of trial and probation. Men are placed in this world, that they may show what is in their hearts, and thus discover their true characters. He sets before them in the works of creation sufficient evidence of His existence and perfections; He lays them under obligations to love and thank Him by the blessings of His providence; He clearly prescribes their duty, and gives them directions for its performance, in His Word; He places conscience in their breasts, as an overseer and monitor; and then, wrapped up in His own invisibility, sits silent and unseen, to notice and record their conduct. II. THE OPINIONS WHICH SINNERS FORM OF GOD, IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS THUS KEEPING SILENCE. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." It is their opinions of His moral character, of His views and feelings with respect to themselves and their conduct, to which the assertion refers. In this respect every unawakened sinner supposes, or at least acts as if he supposed, that God is altogether such an one as himself. Feeling no immediate tokens of God's displeasure, he flatters himself that God is not displeased. Finding it easy to justify himself, and satisfy his own conscience, he fancies that it will be equally easy to satisfy God, and justify his conduct at His bar. III. THE MEASURES WHICH GOD WILL EMPLOY TO CONVINCE SINNERS THAT HE IS NOT SUCH AN ONE AS THEMSELVES. "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." This He will do at the judgment-day. 1. It implies giving the sinner a clear and full view of all the sins of his life, in thought, word and deed, in the order in which they were committed. Such a view no sinner has of himself in the present life. He is guilty of ten thousand thousand sins, which he does not even suspect to be sins. 2. It implies giving him a view of all their aggravations. All the mercies he received, all the afflictions which were sent to rouse him, all the opportunities, privileges, warnings and means of grace with which he was favoured; all the sermons which he heard, and all the secret checks which he experienced from his own conscience, and from the strivings of God's Spirit, will then be set before him, to show that he sinned wilfully and knowingly, against light and against love, and that he is, therefore, without excuse. 3. It implies giving him a full view of their dreadful malignity and criminality. Of this sinners see nothing in this world. They do not see what an infinitely great and glorious Being that God is against whom sin is committed. They do not see what an infinitely precious, lovely, and all-sufficient Saviour they are rejecting. They do not see what a heaven they are forfeiting, nor into what a hell they are plunging themselves by sin. They do not realize how short is time in comparison with eternity, nor how worthless the body when compared with the soul. But at the judgment-day they will behold every object in its true light. IV. WHAT IMPROVEMENT CARELESS SINNERS OUGHT TO MAKE OF THESE AWFULLY ALARMING TRUTHS. They should be led by them to consideration. It is owing to forgetfulness of God, and to the neglect of considering these important truths, that sinners live as they do. They consider not in their hearts, says Jehovah, that I remember all their wickedness. Is not this the case with respect to some of you? (E. Payson, D.D.)

Ver. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God.—*Forgetfulness of God: its evil*.—Forget God!—is this possible? What! when we see His "eternal power and Godhead" in all things above us and about us? If we look up to the heavens, "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work." If we look around us here, "the earth is full of His goodness." But men, notwithstanding, do forget God. Forgetfulness of God is the source of their wickedness, and should this sinful conduct be persisted in, it will induce a sorer punishment than all created power could remedy. I. AN EVIL. II. ITS PUNISHMENT. III. A MEANS WHEREBY TO CORRECT THE EVIL AND TO AVOID THE PUNISHMENT. (W. Mudge, B.A.)

Ver. 23. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.—*Songs of the Bible*.—I. THE SONG OF THE NEW BIRTH. Every believer has learned some of the notes of this

song, for we enter the kingdom singing it. When in the world, the world's songs—songs of merriment and glee—were in our esteem the richest and best; but when we saw Jesus, and heard the music of His grace, then the world's songs could no longer express our joy. In all the miracles of Christ the first act of the healed one was to begin to praise. The leper, the paralytic, Bartimeus, and all the others. And so with those whom Christ has saved. II. **THE SONG OF THANKSGIVING.** How many of them we have in these psalms, but from some men you never hear them—they are always discontented and complaining. But think of our temporal mercies—our faculties of mind and body are daily mercies. Some never see them because they keep their eyes so fastened on the dark specks of disappointment and trial, and, seeing these only, they fancy these cover the whole of the sky. But it is not so. If God take from us one mercy, think how many we have left. Oliver Wendell Holmes has beautifully said, "If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me that there were particles of iron in it, I might search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but take a magnet and swing through it, and the magnet will draw to it the particles of iron immediately. So let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and, as the magnet finds the iron, it will find in every hour some heavenly blessings: only the iron in God's sand is always gold." III. **THE SONG OF VICTORY.** Listen to that song as it rises from Israel's redeemed hosts on the bank of the Red Sea. No wonder that they felt like singing, for all the fears of yesterday had been buried in that sea. They did not sing thus in Egypt, for there they were slaves. And in the captivity, when a song was required of them by their captors, they said, "We cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land." There are many psalms of David which are like a full orchestra of praise; but the majority of them are penitential cries, a singing as by the waters of Marah. And so it was with Israel of old, and it is so with the Church of to-day: the lamentations outnumber the praises; the defeats are more than the victories. And yet, though here they cannot be complete, we have our victories, and we ought even now to render praise for them. IV. **SONGS IN THE NIGHT.** See Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi. But when we are free from the bondage of the world, we shall be as they, who at midnight sang praises. Let us also sing, so that the prisoners around may hear us. V. **THE SONG BEFORE THE THRONE**—the heavenly song. What an immense company join in it. And it is a song without tears. Ours here are never that. But there they are tearless and eternal. (*A. E. Kittridge, D.D.*) *Glorifying God*:—I. **WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED TO GLORIFY GOD.** This is the great end of our existence. Even inanimate beings do this (Ps. xix.). And even wicked men may glorify God, for "the wrath of man shall praise Him." But especially does He look for this from His own people. Now, one of the ways in which we do this is by offering praise. For in true praise exalted sentiments concerning Him fill the mind: there is a lively sense of His presence, and they speak well of His name. See the twelve exhortations to praise in the last of the psalms. II. **OUR OFFERING OF PRAISE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED UNLESS IT BE ACCOMPANIED WITH A CONVERSATION ORDERED ARIGHT.** "Praise-giving is good, but praise-living is better." But for this the grace of God is necessary. III. **SUCH CONDUCT AS THIS ATTRACTS GOD'S NOTICE AND REGARD.** See text. To such persons God will show His salvation—temporal, spiritual, eternal. Have we interest in this salvation? (*W. Jay.*) *Praise*:—A subject, the importance of which it is not possible to overestimate, is here presented for our consideration—the offering of praise, connected more especially with the public service of the Church. Self-seeking in religion is far from being uncommon. It is chargeable upon numbers who may not be selfish in the grosser and more glaring forms of the commission of that sin. The almost exclusive consideration with such as are self-seekers in religion, is personal spiritual comfort. An essayist who wrote years ago, upon various forms of selfishness manifested in the conduct of professors of religion, has left on record this forcible description of those who make personal comfort in their religion not a means but an end. "Epicures in religious comfort, they grow impatient if the cup of consolation be, for a moment, removed from their own lips." "The amplitude of the Divine love seeks to comprehend the universe in its large and life-giving embrace and calls on our affections to arise and follow it in its vast diffusion, but this selfishness stays at home, builds itself in, and sees no glory in that love, but as it embraces a single point, and that point itself." To protect the spiritual system from so deleterious an influence, to prevent devotional exercises, whether public or private, from contracting the taint of selfishness, and to impart to them a healthy

tone, it is expedient that there should be blended with them not only intercessory prayer but the homage of praise. As a faithful remembrancer, the Church ever puts us in mind of the fact that we are bound to praise Him for what He is in Himself, for the glory of His perfections, independent of what He is to us. Without the "right ordering of the conversation"—without practical evidence of sincere endeavour to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," no praise whatever can be offered to Him. The ever-living Intercessor, who has been exalted to the "right hand of the Majesty in the heavens," imparts to praise as well as to supplication and giving of thanks and all other offerings the requisite value. "By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually," etc. Consolatory as sublime is the contemplation of the power and willingness of the ascended Christ to constitute our imperfect offerings worthy of presentation because of the infinite merit of His precious death and passion. There never rises within the breast of the sincere worshipper an aspiration of which He is unmindful, never is there formed a purpose of amendment of life, never is there heaved a sigh of the "sorrow that worketh repentance," which is not observed by Him amidst the glories of that exalted estate in which He reigns as "Head over all things to the Church." It is through Him that the adoration of the militant Church is united with that of those "powers and principalities in heavenly places" upon the purity of whose nature there never did, never shall pass a shadow of blemish. (*C. E. Tisdall, D.D.*)

**To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.—**

*Ordering the conversation aright:*—I. A MAN CANNOT ORDER HIS CONVERSATION ARIGHT WHO DOES NOT SEEK AND WAIT FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD. By the salvation of God we understand man's deliverance from sin and death and condemnation, through the great work of the atonement wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE MAN DOES NOT SEEK THE SALVATION OF GOD ARIGHT WHO DOES NOT SEEK IT IN ORDERING HIS CONVERSATION ARIGHT (Ps. xxv. 14; Hos. vi. 3). A man who sets about it earnestly, doing the will of God as far as he sees it, does not rest in that; he still looks to Christ, he still looks for God's quickening Spirit to give life to his obedience, and that man is ordering his conversation aright. The Word of God warrants us, and the experience of God's children in all ages warrants us, in saying that as He has not said "Seek ye Me" in vain, so no man that seeks honestly to order his conversation aright shall fail to have shown to him, sooner or later, the salvation of God. (*Hugh Stowell, M.A.*) *The necessity of revelation, and a holy life:*—I. IT IS MOST WORTHY OF THE SALVATION OF GOD, THAT IT BE UNDERSTOOD OF THE GENERAL REDEMPTION OF MANKIND BY JESUS CHRIST. Both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. And there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved, neither is there salvation in any other. This knowledge was confined to very narrow limits; to a nation exceedingly small in proportion to the inhabitants of all the earth. The Revelation, besides, was dark, even where it was best known; particularly as to the resurrection of the dead, which is the anchor of our hope after this life, as also by reason of the ambiguity of the law under types and shadows of things to come; which represented a salvation to be given many ages after by this general Redeemer, who was not commonly believed in by the Jews before His coming, nor known by them when He appeared. II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS SALVATION IS ABOVE THE REACH OF NATURAL REASON, AND NOT TO BE ATTAINED BUT BY REVELATION FROM GOD. In this assurance we stand unmoved against all vain suggestions of the impossibility of there being any such mysteries in the Christian religion, and of our own incapacity to believe things which our understanding cannot comprehend. Which assertions proceed from a bold but mistaken philosophy; ignorant of the great power of God; and not rightly distinguishing between the measure of knowledge, sufficient for faith and for demonstration; nor knowing that where the veracity of the affirmer, and the power of the author of any miracle are unquestionable, there we have a good authority to believe His relation of anything, though it shall be wonderful, and far above our capacity to comprehend. III. IT IS A HOLY LIFE WHICH WILL RENDER US THE MOST CAPABLE OF RECEIVING THIS KNOWLEDGE. IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS. 1. If we are firmly secure of our true knowledge of the salvation of God, in the faith of that Church which we do profess, let us then keep this faith in purity of heart and true holiness of life, without which no man shall ever see the Lord. 2. If any man is serious in his inquiries after that knowledge which is to lead him to eternal life, let him then in the sincerity of his heart make this trial; and, from a good life, begin his searches



after the knowledge of the salvation of God. 3. Wickedness of life is the most fatal step to infidelity, and sets us at the greatest distance from this knowledge of the salvation of God. (W. Whitfeld.) *The first step towards salvation*:—If these words mean anything, they must mean that the man who wishes to save his soul ought to endeavour, at least, to cast out directly whatever may be wrong in his practice. The text may be read also thus, "Him who disposes or regulates his conduct, I will cause to enjoy the salvation of God." Then the words prescribe something preparatory, something to be done by any one and every one who honestly desires the being converted and saved. He is not to sit still, as one who waits for irresistible grace: let him forthwith observe what is wrong in his "conversation"—that is, in his manner of living and conduct—and let him at once set about correcting it. Now, thus did Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, in his preparatory ministry. He bade men cease from dishonest and evil conduct. Men asked him what they were to do, and he plainly told them. You must see at once, that nothing could be further removed than this proceeding of the Baptist from what is mystical and unintelligible; neither publicans nor soldiers could plead that there was nothing definite in the answers which they received—nothing on which they were unable to take hold, and forthwith to act. By going straightway into the business of everyday life, giving men something to do, and something, moreover, which it were idle to dispute that they had power to do, St. John impressed on his exhortations a practical and a tangible character. All that we have to ask you, at this stage of our inquiry, is, whether you do not perceive how exactly the exhortation of the Baptist bears out the promise of the psalmist in our text—how the one is based on the other; for in prescribing as preparatory to repentance, that the publican should cease from his extortion, and the soldier from his violence, was not St. John proceeding altogether upon the principle, that "to him that ordereth his conversation aright shall be shown the salvation of God"? Now, then, suppose we pass from the days of the Baptist to our own, and see whether, in our dealings with unconverted men, we ought not similarly to insist on a right ordering of the conversation, as preparatory to genuine religion. In place of contenting ourselves with a general exhortation to repentance, ought we not to descend into particulars—or rather, urge men to the correction of open faults, if they have any wish to be brought to genuine repentance? It is not on repentance, strictly speaking, that we should settle, but on something preliminary to repentance, and the passing over which, so as always to begin with repentance, is what (as we believe) makes our sermons go beyond the mass of unconverted hearers. It is God's rule to give more to him who improves what he has. He therefore who strives to obey conscience may humbly hope for the higher aid of the Spirit of God. And if all of you who have yet the great work of repentance to effect will thus immediately commence the reforming what is guilty and prominently wrong in your conduct, indeed we dare promise that you shall see "the salvation of God"—see it here in the sacrifice of Christ—see it hereafter in the glories of heaven. Thus "ordering your conversation aright"—going, like the publican to the receipt of custom, and banishing thence extortion, or like the soldier to the ranks, and there extinguishing violence, ye will stand ready, by God's help, to the being made truly contrite. In real contrition ye will hasten to Christ, as alone able to deliver; and through Christ ye shall take possession of the kingdom of heaven. (Henry Melvill, B.D.) *Asaph's theology*:—For Asaph, see 1 Chron. vi. 39. He was a prophet, a musician, a poet. The main function of the prophet was to teach, illustrate and enforce the great moral and spiritual truths which lie at the foundation of all true religion. The main office of the Hebrew prophets was to preserve and enlarge that Gospel which, Paul says, was "before the law." It is because this prophetic, this spiritual element pervades most of the psalms that the Psalter has become the hymn-book of the Church in all ages and in all lands. This is specially noticeable in Asaph's three psalms, which treat of the spirituality of all true worship, and of the mystery of the Divine providence—themes which have always had a singular attraction for all deeply religious and prophetic souls. 1. The fiftieth psalm has for its theme the spirituality of all true worship. Asaph suffers his imagination to play round this great theme. Asaph reaches his fine catholic conclusion, that none but those who sacrifice thanksgiving, and dispose their ways aright, can truly serve and please the Lord. This prophetic truth is the common property of the human race. 2. In Ps. lxxiii. and lxxvii. Asaph, from slightly different points of view, deals with a problem interesting to all thoughtful minds. The root of his sorrow is, that

"the hand of the Most High doth change," that it moves uncertainly, inexplicably, as if it had no set purpose, and were working for no definite end. Apparently, the blessings promised to the righteous fell to the wicked, while the threatenings addressed to the wicked were fulfilled on the righteous. Asaph offers us one or two calming and helpful thoughts which any of us to whom this problem is alive and pressing will acknowledge to be of unspeakable value. 1. He holds fast his faith, let facts say what they will, in the law of retribution. He is sure that "punishment is the other half of sin," that the two cannot be divorced for long. 2. Then he discovers that as sin is its own punishment, so also piety is its own reward, but a reward in a far higher sense than that in which sin is its own punishment. For here he does not dwell on and apply the law of retribution. No; God Himself is to be his reward. 3. He looks, and bids us look, for an everlasting reward, an immortality of service and joy. "Afterwards receive me to glory." Asaph's two main contributions to the theology of his time, and of all time, were this doctrine of worship and this vindication of the ways of God with men. Neither of them was new. But they came with special force from the lips of one who was a minister of the altar, and who had himself passed through the agonies of doubt. They were not new then; they are not obsolete now. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

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