

PSALM 73

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 73

A Psalm of Asaph.

It seems by the title that Asaph was the penman of this psalm, as it is certain that he was a composer of psalms and hymns; (see ^{<428>}2 Chronicles 29:30), though it may be rendered, “a psalm for Asaph”, or “unto Asaph” ^{f1011}; and might have David for its author, as some think, who, having penned it, sent it to Asaph, to be made use of by him in public service; (see ^{<347>}1 Chronicles 16:7), and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“a song by the hands of Asaph;”

the occasion of it was a temptation the psalmist fell into, through the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, to think there was nothing in religion, that it was a vain and useless thing; under which he continued until he went into the house of God, and was taught better; when he acknowledged his stupidity and folly, and penned this psalm, to prevent others falling into the same snare, and to set forth the goodness of God to his people, with which it begins.

Ver. 1. *Truly God is good to Israel*, etc.] To Israel, literally understood; in choosing them to be his people above all people on earth; in bringing them into a good land; in favouring them with many external privileges, civil and religious; in giving them his word, statutes, and ordinances, as he did not to other nations: or, spiritually understood, the Israel whom God has chosen, redeemed, and called by his special grace; verily of a truth, God is good to these; there is abundant proof and evidence of it; (see Gill on ^{<394>}Psalm 34:8”), or “only” God is good to such; though he is good to all in a providential way, yet only to his chosen and redeemed ones in a way of special favour; the goodness others share is but a shadow of goodness, in comparison of what they do and shall partake of; they are blessed with blessings indeed, and are only blessed; so this particle is rendered in (^{<351>}Psalm 62:2,4,5), or “but”, or “notwithstanding” ^{f1012}, God is good, etc. that is, though he suffers the wicked to prosper, and his own people much afflicted, yet he is good to them; he supports them under their afflictions,

and makes all to work for their good; gives them grace here, and glory hereafter;

even to such as are of a clean heart; this character excludes the carnal Israelites, who were pure in their own eyes, but not cleansed from their filthiness, and describes the true Israel of God, and explains who are meant by them, such as are pure in heart, inwardly Jews, Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile; this is not natural to men, their hearts are by nature unclean, nor is it in their power to make them clean: this is God's work, he only can create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit; which is done by the sanctifying influences of his grace, and by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and thus purifying their heart's by faith; yet so as not to be free from all impurity of spirit, but as to have a conscience purged from the guilt of sin, and to have the heart sincere and upright towards God.

Ver. 2. *But as for me*, etc.] Who am one of the Israel of God whose heart has been renewed and purified by the grace of God, and to whom he has been kind and good in a thousand instances; yet, ungrateful creature that I am,

my feet were almost gone; out of the good ways of God, the ways of truth and holiness just upon the turn, ready to forsake them, and give up all religion as a vain thing:

my steps had well nigh slipped, or "poured out"^{f1013} like water; the allusion is to standing on wet and slippery ground, where a man can scarcely keep upon his feet. It may be observed, that good men are liable to slips and falls, to fall into sin, snares, and temptations, and from their steadfastness in the faith, but not totally and finally; their feet may be "almost", but not "altogether", gone: their steps may "well nigh" slip, but not "quite"; they may fall, but not be utterly cast down; at least they rise again, and are made to stand; for God is able to keep them, and does keep them, from a total and final falling away.

Ver. 3. *For I was envious at the foolish*, etc.] The atheists, as in (¹⁹⁴¹Psalm 14:1), who deny the creation, as Arama; the wicked, as after explained, as all wicked men are, how wise soever they may be in things natural and civil, yet in religious things, in things of a spiritual nature, they have no understanding; they are proud boasters, glory in themselves, and in their outward attainments, as the word^{f1014} here used signifies; the external

happiness of these, their riches, health, and ease, were envied by the psalmist; (see ^{<4970>}Psalm 37:1),

when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, or “the peace of the wicked” ^{f1015}; with an evil eye. This was the occasion of his slip and fall, this was the temptation he was left unto for a while.

Ver. 4. *For there are no bands in their death*, etc.] Nothing that binds and straitens them, afflicts and distresses them; they have no pain of mind nor of body, but die at once, suddenly, in a moment, wholly at ease and quiet, without any bitterness of soul; (see ^{<48213>}Job 21:13,23,25), or “there are no bands until their death” ^{f1016}; they have no straits nor difficulties all their life long, no distempers nor diseases which may be called “bonds”, (^{<42132>}Luke 13:12,13,16), till they come to die: the Vulgate Latin version is, “there is no respect to their death”; they take no notice of it, they have no care or concern about it; or, as the Targum,

“they are not terrified nor troubled because of the day of their death;”

they put it away far from them, and think nothing about it: but their strength is firm; they are hale and robust, healthful and sound, to the day of their death; their strength is not weakened in the way by diseases and distempers. Some take the word rendered “strength” to signify a porch or palace, and translate it, they are strong as a palace, or in a palace, or their palace is strong ^{f1017} their houses are well built, and continue long.

Ver. 5. *They are not in trouble, as other men*, etc.] Either of body or of mind, as the saints are, who through many tribulations enter the kingdom; or are not in “labour” ^{f1018}, do not labour for food and raiment, or get their bread by the sweat of their brow, as poor men do; nor are weary, so Arama: “neither are they plagued like other men”; smitten of God, corrected, and chastised by him, as his children are; the rod of God is not upon them, (^{<48219>}Job 21:9).

Ver. 6. *Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain*, &c.] Which was the sin of the devils, and of our first parents, and of Sodom, and is the sin of antichrist; and which, of all sins, is most hateful to God; this arises from, at least is increased by, outward prosperity. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; pride and fulness of bread went together in Sodom; and, where it is predominant, it binds as a chain; such who are under the power of it are slaves unto it, they are chained and fettered by it, and it possesses them

wholly; it shows itself in the several members of their bodies, in their eyes and feet, their walk and gait, and in their conduct and behaviour, and in the several actions of their lives, and is rightly called “the pride of life”; or rather they bind it about themselves as a chain, fancying it to be an ornament to them, what sets them off, and makes them look great in the eyes of others; whereas the reverse is what is of great price, and in high esteem with God and good men; namely, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit:

violence covereth them as a garment; wicked men that are prosperous and proud are generally oppressive to others; and are very often open in their acts of violence, which are as openly done and to be seen of all men, as the clothes upon their backs; and frequently the clothes they wear are got by rapine and oppression, so that they may properly be called garments of violence; (see ^{<2816>}Isaiah 59:6).

Ver. 7 *Their eyes stand out with fatness*, etc.] Or their face, the eyes being put for the whole face; so the Targum,

“their face is changed, because of fatness;”

(see ^{<1857>}Job 15:27), otherwise through fatness the eyes are almost enclosed: or “it goes forth out of the fatness of their eyes”^{f1019}; that is, either “pride”, which shows itself in haughty looks and scornful airs, through the abundance possessed; or “violence”, seen in the fierceness of the eyes, and fury of the countenance; or “their eyes go out through fatness”^{f1020} that is, through the plenty they enjoy, their eyes go out in lust after lawful objects:

they have more than heart could wish; that they themselves could have wished for heretofore, though not now; for what is it that a worldly covetous heart cannot and does not wish for? if it had all the world, it would not satisfy it: or “the imaginations of the heart go on”^{f1021}; that is, after more, not being content with such things as they have; or “they”, i.e. their pride and violence,

exceed the imaginations of the heart^{f1022}; they are more than can be conceived of, they overpass the deeds of the wicked, (^{<3188>}Jeremiah 5:28) or “they transgress by the imaginations of the heart”^{f1023}; which are evil, and that continually.

Ver. 8. *They are corrupt*, etc.] In themselves, in their principles, and in their practices, being shapen and conceived in sin, and born of the flesh; and are corrupters, or “corrupt” themselves, and their ways, and also others by their corrupt speech, evil communications, and bad examples: or “they consume away”; like smoke, or into it, as (⁴⁹⁵⁷¹Psalm 37:20) or as wax melteth at the fire, (⁴⁹⁸¹³Psalm 68:2 ³⁸⁴¹²Zechariah 14:12), where the same word is used as here: or “they cause to consume away” ^{f1024}; “they melt or dissolve others”; they consume them, and waste their estates by their oppression and violence; they make their hearts to melt with their threatening and terrifying words; or they make them dissolute in their lives by keeping them company:

and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak oppression and revolt, threaten with it, (²⁹⁹¹³Isaiah 59:13), and speak in vindication of it, and in a boasting glorying manner; so Arama; which is speaking wickedly concerning it:

they speak loftily: proudly, arrogantly, in a haughty and imperious manner: or “from on high” ^{f1025}; as if they were in heaven, and above all creatures, and even God himself; and as if what they said were oracles, and to be received as such, without any scruple and hesitation. Thus Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar spake, (⁴¹⁸¹⁰Exodus 5:2 ²³⁶¹⁰Isaiah 36:20 ²⁰⁸¹⁵Daniel 3:15) and the little horn, or antichrist, (²⁰⁰¹¹Daniel 7:20 ³¹⁰¹⁴2 Thessalonians 2:4 ⁴⁶³¹⁶Revelation 13:6).

Ver. 9. *They set their mouth against the heavens*, etc.] Against God in heaven, (see ²⁰⁰¹⁶Daniel 4:26 ⁴¹¹²⁵Matthew 21:25 ⁴¹⁵¹⁸Luke 15:18), against his being, saying, there is no God; against his perfections, thinking him to be such an one as themselves; against his purposes and decrees, replying against him, and charging him with insincerity, cruelty, and unrighteousness; and against his providence, either denying it, or affirming it to be unequal; and against his doctrines, ordinances, and ministers. Aben Ezra interprets it also of the angels of heaven, who are spoken against, when it is denied that there are any such beings, as were by the Sadducees; and blasphemed, when the worshipping of them is introduced. The Targum understands it of the saints of heaven, with which compare (⁴⁶³¹⁶Revelation 13:6) it may be applied to civil magistrates, the higher powers, who represent on earth God in heaven; and there are some that despise dominion, and speak evil of such dignities:

and their tongue walketh through the earth: sparing none, high nor low, but injures all sorts of persons with their lies and calumnies. This denotes the unbridled liberty which wicked men take with their tongues; there is no restraint upon them, no stopping of them; (see ^{<915>}Psalm 12:5) the universal mischief they are continually doing, and the diabolical influence of their detraction and falsehood; like Satan, their tongues walk to and fro in the earth, doing all the injury to the credit and characters of men they possibly can.

Ver. 10. *Therefore his people return hither,* etc.] Either the true people of God, and so the Targum, the people of the Lord, and whom the psalmist owned for his people; for the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, read “my people”; who seeing the prosperity of the wicked, and feeling their own afflictions, return to the same way of thinking, and fall by the same snare and temptation as the psalmist did; or such who were only the people of God by profession, but hypocrites, who observing the trouble that attends a religious life, and the prosperity of wicked men, return from the good ways of God they have outwardly walked in for some time, to the conversation of these men, and join themselves to them: or else, “his” being put for “their”, the sense is, the people of these wicked men, of everyone of them, return unto them, and flock about them, and caress and flatter them, because of their prosperous circumstances, and join with them in their evil practices of oppression and slander; which sense seems best to agree with what goes before and follows after:

and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; meaning either to the people of God, and to be understood either of the abundance of their tears, on account of their afflictions inward and outward; (see ^{<1916>}Psalm 6:6 42:3 119:136), so the Targum,

“and many tears flow unto them;”

or of their afflictions themselves, which are oftentimes compared to waters in Scripture; (see ^{<907>}Psalm 42:7 66:12 ^{<340>}Isaiah 43:2), which are given them in measure: it is a cup of them that is put into their hands, and in full measure; they have a full cup of them; many are their tribulations, through which they enter the kingdom, and they are all of God; it is he that wrings them out to them with his fatherly hand: or else, taking the people to mean the followers and companions of the wicked, the words are to be understood of the plenty of good things which such men enjoy in this life,

their cup runs over; and indeed these seem to be the persons who are introduced speaking the following words.

Ver. 11. *And they say, how doth God know?* etc.] Owing there is a God, but questioning his knowledge; for the words are not an inquiry about the way and manner of his knowing things; which is not by the senses, as hearing and seeing; eyes and ears are improperly ascribed to him; nor in a discursive way, by reasoning, and inferring one thing from another; for he knows things intuitively, beholding all things in his own eternal mind and will: but they are a question about his knowledge itself, as follows:

and is their knowledge in the most High? they acknowledge God to be the most High, and yet doubt whether there is knowledge in him; and indeed the higher with respect to place, and at the greater distance he was from them, the less they imagined he knew of affairs below; (see ^{<38213>}Job 22:13,14) for the knowledge called in question is to be understood of his providential notice of human affairs, which they thought he did not concern himself with, as being below his regard; (see ^{<3899>}Ezekiel 9:9 ^{<38112>}Zephaniah 1:12) and therefore concluded that their acts of oppression and violence, and their insolent words against God and men, would pass unobserved, and with impunity. If these are the words of good men, of the people of God under affliction, they are to be considered as under a temptation from their affliction, and the prosperity of the wicked, to call in question the providence of God in the government of the world, and his love to them, which is sometimes expressed by his knowledge of them, (^{<3906>}Psalm 1:6 ^{<3819>}2 Timothy 2:19).

Ver. 12. *Behold, these are the ungodly,* etc.] Who say and do as before declared; such as these must be without the knowledge of God, the fear, love, and worship of him: who prosper in the world; in worldly and temporal things, in their bodies and outward estates, but not in their souls and spiritual things: “in this world”, as the Targum is; all their prosperity is here; their good things are in this life, their evil things will be in that to come; though ungodly, they prosper in the world, and as long as they are in it; or they are at peace and in case, and are quiet; they have nothing to disturb them, they are not in outward trouble, and their sins do not distress them, and they have no concern about another world:

they increase in riches; which they are in the pursuit of, and overtake and enjoy in great abundance; whereby they become mighty and powerful, as the word ^{f1026} for “riches” signifies: these words are the observation of the

psalmist, and which was the occasion of the following temptation he was led into.

Ver. 13. *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain*, etc.] Which supposes that his heart had been unclean, as every man's is, and which appears by what is in it, and by what comes out of it; that it was now cleansed, not in an absolute and legal sense, as if it was wholly free from sin, for this no man can say; but in an evangelical sense, being purified by faith in the blood of Christ; that he had himself some concern in the cleansing of his heart, which seems to be contrary to (^{<3110>}Proverbs 20:9) and besides, this is the Lord's own work, (^{<3510>}Psalm 51:10 ^{<3625>}Ezekiel 36:25) wherefore this may be considered as a wrong and rash expression of his; for as he was wrong in one part of it, its being cleansed in vain, so he might be in the other, in ascribing it to himself; though it may be allowed, consistent with what is before observed, that a believer has a concern in the cleansing of his heart; for, being convinced of the impurity of it, he owns and laments it before the Lord; and, seeing the fountain of the Redeemer's blood opened, he applies to it, and to him for cleansing; and expresses a love unto, a great and studious concern for purity of heart as well as life; and, under the influence of divine grace, is enabled to keep a watch over it, whereby, through the same grace, it is preserved from much pollution; and by fresh application to the blood of Christ, is cleansed from what it daily contracts:

and washed my hands in innocency: that is, "in vain", as before; which denotes the performance of good works, a course of holy life and conversation, which when right springs from purity of heart; (see Gill on "^{<3206>}Psalm 26:6"), now the psalmist under temptation concluded that all his religion and devotion were in vain, all his hearing, and reading, and attending on ordinances, all his concern for purity of heart and life; since those who showed no regard to these things prospered in the world, and increased in riches, abounded in ease and plenty, and seemed to be rather the favourites of heaven than religious men; and this temptation was strengthened by the following observation.

Ver. 14. *For all the day long have I been plagued*, etc.] "Smitten or scourged" ^{f1027}, as in (^{<3976>}Psalm 73:5), that is, afflicted of God; which is no ways inconsistent with his love, nor with his covenant, nor with an interest in him, as a covenant God and Father; (see ^{<3809>}Psalm 89:29-34 ^{<3876>}Hebrews 12:5-8),

and chastened every morning; not in wrath, but in love, and for good; not with the chastisement of a cruel one, but of a loving and tender father; and therefore not to be improved in such a manner, as if on this account there was nothing in religion; whereas the daily notices the Lord takes of his people this way show his regard unto them, and care of them.

Ver. 15. *If I say, I will speak thus*, etc.] Either as the wicked do, (^{<49738>}Psalm 73:8,9,11) or rather as he had thought in his own mind, (^{<49733>}Psalm 73:13,14), wherefore he kept it all to himself, and did not make known to others the reasonings of his mind, and the temptations he laboured under:

behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children; of whom care should be taken, above all things, that they be not offended, (^{<49816>}Matthew 18:6), or “should condemn”; as the Targum; or as Jarchi,

“I should make them transgressors, and wicked persons;”

should represent them as if they were men hated and rejected of God, because of their afflictions: the words may be rendered, “behold the generation of thy children, I have transgressed” ^{f1028}; by giving way to the above temptation, which might have been prevented by considering the church, children, and people of God, and the care he has taken of them, the regard he has shown to them, and the preservation of them in all ages. The words are an apostrophe to God, who has children by adopting grace, and which appear so by their regeneration; and there is a generation of them in all ages; when one goes, another comes; there is always a seed, a spiritual offspring, to serve him, which is counted for a generation.

Ver. 16. *When I thought to know this*, etc.] How to reconcile the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, to the perfections of God, and his wise providence in the government of the world, by the mere dint of reason, without consulting the sacred oracles, or his own and others’ experience:

it was too painful for me: too laborious and toilsome, a work he was not equal to; “hic labor, hoc opus”; (see ^{<21087>}Ecclesiastes 8:17).

Ver. 17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God*, etc.] The tabernacle or house of God, where the Word of God was read and explained, prayer was made, and sacrifices offered up, and where fellowship was had with the saints, and communion with God himself; which for one hour or moment is preferable to all the prosperity of the wicked, during their whole life. This

shows that though the psalmist was beset with the temptation, yet not overcome; it did not so far prevail as to cause him to neglect public worship, and relinquish the house of God, and the ordinances of it; and it is right, under temptations, doubts, and difficulties, to attend the public ministrations, which is the way and means to have relief under temptations, to have doubts resolved, and difficulties removed: some by “the sanctuary of God” understand the Scriptures, which are holy and of God, and are profitable for instruction, and are to be consulted and entered into by a serious reading of and deep meditation on them; whereby may be known the happiness that is prepared for the saints in the other world, and the misery of the wicked, and hereby judgment may be made of the present case and condition of each: others interpret it of the world of spirits, which may be entered into by contemplation; when it may be observed that the spirits of just men upon their dissolution possess unspeakable joys and glories, and the souls of the wicked are in inconceivable torments:

then understood I their end; both of the godly and of the wicked; that the end of the righteous is peace, rest, salvation, and eternal life, and the end of the wicked is ruin, destruction, and death; (see ^{<4875>}Psalm 37:35-38).

Ver. 18. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places*, etc.] In which a man cannot stand long, and without danger; and the higher they are the more dangerous, being slippery, and such are places of honour and riches. The phrase denotes the uncertainty and instability of these things, and the danger men are in who are possessed of them of falling into destruction and misery. The Targum is,

“thou didst set them in darkness;”

to be in slippery places, and in the dark, is very uncomfortable, unsafe, and dangerous indeed; (see ^{<4876>}Psalm 35:6 ^{<2432>}Jeremiah 23:12) and it may be observed, that all this honour, promotion, and riches, are of God; it is he that sets them in these places of honour and profit; and he that sets them up can pull them down, as he does; so it follows,

thou castest them down into destruction: into temporal destruction, by removing them from their high stations into a very low, mean, and contemptible state, as were Shebna and Nebuchadnezzar, (^{<24215>}Isaiah 22:15,19 ^{<2044>}Daniel 4:24,25) and into everlasting destruction, from whence there is no recovery; (see ^{<4852>}Psalm 55:23).

Ver. 19. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment?* etc.] Very suddenly, which is often the case of wicked men, who cry Peace and safety, and sudden destruction comes upon them, (^{<318>}1 Thessalonians 5:3), so as in a moment were the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Pharaoh and his host, and of Korah and his company, (^{<296>}Lamentations 4:6 ^{<148>}Exodus 14:28 ^{<462>}Numbers 16:21,45), the words are expressed with admiration, as wondering at the sudden and amazing turn of things:

they are utterly consumed with terrors: their destruction is not only sudden, but entire; it is like the breaking in pieces of a potter's vessel; a shard of which cannot be gathered up and used, or like the casting of a millstone into the sea, which will never rise more; such will be the destruction of antichrist; (see ^{<427>}Revelation 2:27 18:21) and this is done "with terrors"; either by terrible judgments inflicted on them from without; or with terrors inwardly seizing upon their minds and consciences; as, at the time of temporal calamities, or at death, however at judgment, when the awful sentence will be pronounced upon them; (see ^{<871>}Job 27:20).

Ver. 20. *As a dream when one awaketh,* etc.] So will be all the temporal felicity of wicked men, all an illusion, all a dream; when they lift up their eyes in hell, and awake in the resurrection, they will find themselves destitute of all their riches and honours, and it will be as if they had only dreamed of them, and never enjoyed them; (see ^{<816>}Job 20:6-8 ^{<298>}Isaiah 29:8) so, "O Lord, when thou awaketh"; to judgment, to take vengeance on wicked men, and vindicate his own people; and who seems sometimes to be as it were asleep, and to take no notice of things, when the judgment of the ungodly, and their damnation, seem to slumber, though it does not; (see ^{<976>}Psalms 7:6 ^{<618>}2 Peter 2:3) or when he awakes the dead at the time of the resurrection. Death is often compared to sleep in Scripture, and the resurrection to an awaking out of it, which is the Lord's work, (^{<239>}Isaiah 26:19 ^{<712>}Daniel 12:2), and so the Targum,

"O Lord, when thou shalt raise them from their graves:"

thou shalt despise their image; the image of the earthly man, of sin and of Satan, which is upon both their souls and bodies; which will both be destroyed in hell: or their riches and honour, the vain show in which they have walked, their outward pomp and splendour; which was only a show, an outward appearance, and no solidity and substance; and which will not be esteemed in the great day of account, but despised; (see ^{<838>}Job

36:18,19), the wicked will awake, and arise to everlasting shame and contempt, (^{<2712>}Daniel 12:2).

Ver. 21. *Thus my heart was grieved*, etc.] Not with his own sins, nor with the sins of the wicked, but at their prosperity; for this is an account of himself, while under the temptation, and before he went into the sanctuary of the Lord; or when he was “leavened” ^{f1029}, with the old leaven of wickedness, and envy, and indignation; he was in a ferment, so Plautus ^{f1030} uses the phrase for being in anger and wrath; he swelled, as what is leavened does, against God and his providence: or was “soured” ^{f1031}; he was out of humour and angry with God, or was exasperated and provoked at the favours bestowed upon the wicked. Some render it “inflamed” ^{f1032}, made hot; not with the love of God, and meditation upon it, but with wrath and indignation:

and I was pricked in my reins; disturbed and distracted in his thoughts, felt a great deal of pain in his mind, while he was considering the prosperity of the wicked; which was as a sword in his bones, and as an arrow shot into his reins; (see ^{<2813>}Lamentations 3:13).

Ver. 22. *So foolish was I*, etc.] To envy the prosperity of the wicked, which is of so short a continuance; to arraign the providence and perfections of God, and to conclude so hastily that there was nothing in religion:

and ignorant; or, “I knew not” ^{f1033}; what he attempted to know, (^{<4926>}Psalm 73:16), nor the end of the wicked, till he went into the sanctuary of the Lord; nor the counsel and design of God, in his methods of providence towards wicked men:

I was as a beast before thee, or “with thee” ^{f1034}; in the knowledge of the ways and works of God, even those of providence; (see ^{<1921>}Psalm 92:5,6,7), unteachable, untractable, kicking against God and his providential dispensations; not behaving like a man, much, less like a saint; but even as the worst of brutes, as the behemoth in (^{<1845>}Job 40:15), for the same word is here used; he concluded that God, who saw all the wickedness of his heart, the workings and reasonings of his mind, which were so vain and foolish, could esteem him no other than as a beast; so the Targum, “as a beast I am accounted with thee:”

the words may be rendered, “I was the veriest beast before thee”; there being no note of similitude in the text; the word for “beast” being in the

plural number, may be used for a superlative; Plautus ^{f1035} uses the word “bellua”, beast, for a stupid man.

Ver. 23. *Nevertheless, I am continually with thee*, etc.] Upon the heart of God, in his hands, under his eye, under his wings of protection and care, and not suffered to depart from him finally and totally; he could not be disunited and removed from him by the above temptation; nor was he left to cast off the fear of the Lord, and to forsake his worship and service; nor altogether to lose his love and affection for him, which still continued; (see ^{<4735>}Psalm 73:25), or “I shall be always with thee” ^{f1036}; not now, for though the saints are always in union with the Lord, yet they have not always communion with him; but hereafter, in heaven, to all eternity:

thou hast holden me by my right hand; as an instance of condescension, respect, and familiarity; (see ^{<4239>}Acts 23:19), as a parent takes his child by the hand, and learns it to go, so the Lord takes his children by the hand, and teaches them to walk by faith in him, (^{<2108>}Hosea 11:3) or in order to keep them from falling, and bear them up under temptations and exercises; as well as to lead them into more intimate communion with himself in his sanctuary, and to raise them up out of their low estate to an exalted one; (see ^{<2851>}Isaiah 45:1), and likewise to put something into their hands, to supply their wants, and fill them with his good things; (see ^{<2169>}Ezekiel 16:49).

Ver. 24. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*, etc.] Which is wise and prudent, wholesome, suitable, and seasonable, hearty, sincere, and faithful, and which is freely given, and when taken, infallibly succeeds: or “according to thy counsel” ^{f1037}; the determinate counsels, purposes, and will of God, which were of old faithfulness and truth; who does all things after the counsel of his own will in providence and grace: or “by thy counsel” ^{f1038}; by the Scriptures of truth, the revealed word, which contains the will of God, and directions for a holy walk and conversation; by the Gospel and truths of it, called the whole counsel of God, (^{<417>}Acts 20:27), and by his Holy Spirit, which is a spirit of counsel as well as of might; and by which the Lord guides his people in the ways of peace, truth, righteousness, and holiness, through this world, to the heavenly glory, as follows:

and afterward receive me to glory; into a glorious place, an house not made with hands, a city whose builder and maker is God, into a kingdom and glory, or a glorious kingdom; and into glorious company, the company

of Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and glorified saints, where glorious things will be seen, and a glory enjoyed both in soul and body to all eternity; for this glory is eternal glory, a glory that passes not away: or “in glory”^{f1039}; in a glorious manner: some render it, “after glory thou wilt receive me”^{f1040}; that is, after all the glory and honour thou hast bestowed upon me here, thou wilt take me to thyself in heaven; so the Targum,

“after the glory is completed, which thou saidst thou wouldst bring upon me, thou wilt receive me:”

but rather the sense is, “after” thou hast led and guided me by thy counsel through the wilderness of this world; “after” all the afflictions and temptations of this present life are over; “after” I have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, or “after” death itself, thou wilt receive me into everlasting joy and happiness; (see ~~f1050~~ 1 Peter 5:10).

Ver. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee*, etc.] Which includes God the Father, Son, and Spirit; God the Father, as his only covenant God and Father; Christ as his only Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer, Head, Husband, Advocate, and Intercessor; the Spirit as his only sanctifier, Comforter, earnest, and sealer; and is expressive of their being the one and only Lord God, the sole object of worship, trust, and confidence; his only helper and guide; and in whom his supreme happiness and glory lay; and it excludes the sun, moon, and stars, in the lower heavens, from being the object of worship and trust; and angels and glorified saints in the highest heavens: the words may be rendered, “who is for me in heaven?”^{f1041} on my side, my protector and defender; (see ~~f1081~~ Romans 8:31)

and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee; or “with thee”^{f1042}; there are many things on earth desirable, as riches, health, friends, food, raiment, etc. but not to be compared with God and Christ, and the blessed Spirit; with the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost; there are none to be loved and delighted in as they, nor anything so desirable as fellowship with them: or “with thee I desire not the earth”^{f1043}; the whole world, and all things in it, are nothing in comparison of God; if a man was possessed of the whole of it, and had not interest in the Lord, he would be miserable; and if he has an interest in him, he has enough without it; for all things are his, God is all in all; wherefore he is willing to leave all, and be with him for ever: the Targum is,

“who is like unto thee, that is, mine in heaven but thee? and with thee I do not desire a companion on earth.”

(see ^{<1916>}Psalm 89:6).

Ver. 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth*, etc.] Either through vehement desires of communion with God deferred, (see ^{<1812>}Psalm 84:2) or through afflictive dispensations of Providence, being smitten and chastened continually, (^{<1734>}Psalm 73:14), or through inward trials and exercises, by reason of indwelling sin, temptations, and desertions: or rather the words are expressive of the body being emaciated by sickness and diseases; and the heart fainting through fear of death, or rather failing at it, being at the point of death; the heart being, as philosophers say, the first that lives, and the last that dies:

but God is the strength of my heart, or “the rock of my heart” ^{f1044}; when overwhelmed with distress through outward trouble, or in the lowest condition with respect to spiritual things; when grace is weak, corruptions strong, temptations prevail, and afflictions are many; then does the Lord support and sustain his people, and strengthens them with strength in their souls; and in the moment of death, by showing them that its sting is taken away, and its curse removed; that their souls are going to their Lord, and about to enter into his joy; and that their bodies will rise again glorious and incorruptible:

and my portion for ever; both in life and at death, and to all eternity; this is a very large portion indeed; such who have it inherit all things; yea, it is immense and inconceivable; it is a soul satisfying one, and is safe and secure; it can never be taken away, nor can it be spent; it will last always; (see ^{<1416>}Psalm 142:5 ^{<2124>}Lamentations 3:24).

Ver. 27. *For, lo, they that are far from thee*, etc.] Who are alienated from the life of God, far from the law of God, and subjection and obedience to it; and from righteousness either moral or evangelical, and from the love and fear of God, and worship of him:

shall perish; not merely at death, as even righteous men do, but be lost eternally:

thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee; that follow after other gods, and worship them; which is spiritual adultery and fornication, the Scriptures often speak of, and intend by it idolatry; (see

^{<15316}Deuteronomy 31:16) or who set their hearts and affections upon the creature, and have them alienated from God; and love the creature more and besides the Creator: the past tense seems to be put for the future, and so some render it, “thou shalt destroy”, or “cut off”^{f1045}; destroy them soul and body, and punish them with an everlasting destruction in hell; the Targum is,

“that wander from thy fear;”

that is, from the worship of God.

Ver. 28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God*, etc.] In prayer, and other acts of religious worship; to attend the word and ordinances in the sanctuary, where the psalmist had lately been delivered out of a sore temptation, and so had a recent experience, which was fresh in his mind, of the advantages of such exercises; for it is both an honourable good, what is becoming and commendable, and a pleasant good, what yields delight and satisfaction, and a profitable good, to draw nigh to God by Christ, the new and living way, assisted by the Holy Spirit; which, when done aright, is with faith, sincerity, reverence, and a holy boldness:

I have put my trust in the Lord God; as the rock of his refuge and salvation, as his portion and inheritance:

that I may declare all thy works; of providence and grace, by proclaiming the wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness of God in them; by giving him the glory of them, and by expressing thankfulness for them, both by words and deeds.