

PSALM 102

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 102

*A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed,
and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.*

Whether this psalm was written by David, under a prophetic spirit, concerning future times; or whether by one of the Babylonish captivity, as Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra, or any other; either just at the close of it, or upon their return from it; since it is said that “the set time to favour Zion was come”, is not certain: however, since Zion was a type of the Gospel church, it may be very well applied to Gospel times; and the rather, since some passages in it are cited by the apostle in (~~3110~~ Hebrews 1:10-12) as to be understood of Christ: (see ~~19A25~~ Psalm 102:25-27). The Syriac version calls it,

“a prophecy concerning the new people, namely, the Gentiles in the faith:”

it is entitled, “a prayer of the afflicted”, or “poor”^{f1401}; which Austin understood of Christ, who became poor for our sakes, and was afflicted of God and men. Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret it of the Jews suffering affliction in the Babylonish captivity; the former observes, that it was the opinion of some of their interpreters that this prayer was composed by some wise and understanding man that fell into the hand of his enemies. It may very well be applied to any afflicted person; all the people of God are more or less a poor and afflicted people; outwardly afflicted in body, in estate, and in their good name and character; inwardly with the corruptions of their own hearts, the temptations of Satan, and divine desertions; when it is a very proper time for prayer, (~~3113~~ James 5:13), and it is their privilege that they have a God of grace and mercy to pray unto, a throne of grace to come to at all times, a spirit of grace and supplication to assist them, and Christ their Advocate and High Priest, to present their petitions for them: and this everyone may do, “when he is overwhelmed”; pressed with the burden of sin, without a view of pardon, covered, as the word^{f1402} signifies, with shame and sorrow for it; almost overset with, and ready to faint and

sink under, afflictions, which like waves and billows roll over him; and at the same time is attended with much darkness and unbelieving frames of soul: “and poureth out his complaint before the Lord”; concerning his trials and afflictions, especially concerning the badness and haughtiness of his heart, the hardness of it, being so unaffected with providences, and under the word, and at the ordinances; concerning his leanness, barrenness, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace; his lukewarmness and indifference, his deadness and dulness in duty; his unbelief, distrust, and dejection of mind; as well as of the low estate of Zion, the little success of the Gospel, the few instances of conversion, and the unbecoming walk of many professors. Such a “complaint” as this, or “meditation”^{f1403}, which he has thought of and digested in his mind; or all that is in his heart, as Aben Ezra observes, “he pours out” which denotes enlargement in prayer, the abundance of his heart, out of which his mouth speaketh; the fulness of his petition, as also freedom of expression it signifies a **παρησια**, a telling all one’s mind, speaking out with great liberty; laying it in an humble manner before the Lord, before whom all things are naked and open, and leaving it with him, in entire submission and resignation to his will, to do as seems good in his sight.

Ver. 1. *Hear my prayer, O Lord*, etc.] The prayer of a poor, destitute, and afflicted one; his own, and not another’s; not what was composed for him, but composed by him; which came out of his own heart, and out of unfeigned lips, and expressed under a feeling sense of his own wants and troubles; and though dictated and inwrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, yet, being put up by him in faith and fervency, it is called his own, and which he desires might be heard:

and let my cry come unto thee; he calls his prayer cry, because it was uttered in distress, and with great vehemency and importunity; and he prays that it might come unto God, even into his ears, and be regarded by him, and not shut out: prayer comes aright to God, when it comes through Christ, and out of his hands, perfumed with the incense of his mediation.

Ver. 2. *Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble*, etc.] Thy Shechinah, as the Targum: when God hides his face at any time from his people, it is a trouble to them, and very grievous; but especially when they are in any other trouble besides; it is very afflicting, indeed, when to their outward trouble this is added, which was Job’s case, (~~1821b~~ Job 23:1-3), incline thine ear unto me; condescend, in great grace and goodness, to

stoop and bow thine ear, and listen to the voice of my supplication: in the day when I call, answer me speedily; good men are always for speedy answers of prayer; they would have them the day, the hour, the moment they are calling upon God: sometimes answers are returned as soon, (^{<2754>}Isaiah 65:24), the case of the psalmist was very distressing, and, as he thought at least, required haste, and therefore requests a speedy answer.

Ver. 3. *For my days are consumed like smoke*, etc.] Which suddenly rises up, is easily dissipated, and quickly disappears; so sudden, short, and transient, are the days of man's life; (see ^{<3014>}James 4:14) or "in smoke" ^{f1404}, as the Syriac version; his days were spent in great obscurity, in the darkness of affliction, temptation, and desertion; and in so much vexation, trouble, and uneasiness, as if he had lived in smoke all his time: and

my bones are burnt as an hearth; on which fire is continually made for the preparation of food, and other uses: or as a "trivet", or "gridiron": so the Targum: or as a frying pan; so the Arabic version: the meaning is, that, through trouble and grief, his bones, the strongest parts of his body, the props and supports of it, were so weakened and enfeebled, the strength of them so exhausted, that they were as if they had been parched and burnt up, as the hearth by fire; (see ^{<3172>}Proverbs 17:22 ^{<4215>}Psalms 22:15).

Ver. 4. *My heart is smitten, and withered like grass*, etc.] Like grass in the summer solstice ^{f1405}, which being smitten with the heat of the sun, or by some blast of thunder and lightning, is dried up, and withers away; so his heart was smitten with a sense of sin, and of God's wrath and displeasure at him, and with the heat of affliction and trouble, that it failed him, and he could not look up with joy and comfort:

so that I forget to eat my bread; sometimes, through grief and trouble, persons refuse to eat bread, as Jonathan and Ahab, which is a voluntary act, and purposely done; but here, in the psalmist, there was such a loss of appetite, through sorrow, that he forgot his stated meals, having no manner of inclination to food: some understand this of spiritual food, the bread of life, refusing to be comforted with it; so the Targum,

"for I forgot the law of my doctrine."

Ver. 5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning*, etc.] Under the burden of sin, and pressure of afflictions:

my bones cleave to my skin; was quite emaciated, reduced to a skeleton, became nothing but skin and bone^{f1406}; which sometimes is occasioned, as by outward afflictions, so by soul troubles: or “to my flesh”^{f1407}; flesh is put for skin; (see ^{<189D>}Job 19:20 Lam 4:8).

Ver. 6. *I am like a pelican of the wilderness*, etc.] It may be so called, to distinguish it from another of the same name that lives upon the waters; which has the name of “pelican” in the Greek tongue, as is said, from its smiting and piercing its breast, and letting out blood for the reviving of its young; and in the Hebrew language, from its vomiting shell fish it has swallowed down; (see Gill on “^{<08118>}Leviticus 11:18”) where the word is rendered a “pelican” as here, and in (^{<05447>}Deuteronomy 14:17), the same we call the “shovelard”; but a “cormorant” in (^{<23911>}Isaiah 34:11 ^{<3124>}Zephaniah 2:14), however, it seems to be a bird of solitude, and therefore the psalmist compares himself to it. According to Isidore^{f1408}, it is an Egyptian bird, that inhabits the desert of the river Nile, from whence it has the name of Canopus Aegyptus:

I am like an owl of the desert; or “of desert places”; so the Tigurine version; it is translated “the little owl” in (^{<05447>}Leviticus 11:17 ^{<05446>}Deuteronomy 14:16). It delights to be on old walls, and in ruined houses, and cares not to consort with other birds, and it makes a hideous sorrowful noise^{f1409}. Jarchi renders it the hawk, but that, as Kimchi^{f1410} observes, is found in habitable places. Bochart^{f1411} thinks the “onocrotalos” is meant, a bird so much of the same kind with the pelican, that they are promiscuously used by learned men; and which is a creature, as Jerom^{f1412} says, that is used to dwell in desert places; and Isidore^{f1413} observes, that there are two sorts of them, one that lives in the water, and another in the desert; it has its name from its braying like an ass; and Aelianus^{f1414} speaks of a bird of this sort in India, which has a large crop like a sack; and the Hebrew word “cos” here used signifies a cup or vessel, from whence it may have its name; and which he says makes a very disagreeable noise, to which the psalmist may compare the voice of his groaning, (^{<09475>}Psalms 102:5).

Ver. 7. *I watch*, etc.] Night after night, and take no sleep; cannot get any by reason of thoughtfulness, care, and trouble:

and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop; or, “as a bird”^{f1415}; for there is no necessity of limiting it to a sparrow, to which the account does not seem so well to agree; for sparrows will not only perch on housetops

and solitary places, but will make their nests in dwelling houses, and in places of public resort, as temples; hence David speaks of the sparrow finding an house near the altars of God, (~~388B~~ Psalm 84:3) and Herodotus ^{f1416} makes mention of sparrows and other birds making their nests in the temple at Branchides; which may serve to illustrate the text last mentioned: wherefore this may be understood of any solitary bird, and especially of the owl ^{f1417}; the Jews had flat roofs upon their houses, and here birds of solitude would come and sit alone in the night season, to which the psalmist likens himself; being either forsaken by his friends and acquaintance; or, being in melancholy circumstances, he chose to be alone, mourning over his sorrowful state and condition.

Ver. 8. *Mine enemies reproach me all the day*, etc.] For his principles and practices, being different from theirs; for his religion, and preciseness in it; for his faith and profession of it, and for his holy walk and conversation. Good men have their enemies, and always had; but then they are such who are also enemies to God and Christ, and true religion; and these, not content to reproach now and then, continually throw out their scoffs and jeers; which is not grateful, and is here mentioned as an article of complaint; though the saints should reckon reproach for the sake of Christ and religion greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt:

and they that are mad against me; as the Jews were against Christ, because of his miracles, doctrine, and success, and therefore sought to take away his life; and as the Apostle Paul before conversion was, even exceeding mad against the saints, and persecuted them to strange cities, (~~406B~~ Luke 6:11 ~~408B~~ Acts 26:11), so were the psalmist's enemies quite outrageous and implacable, being his sworn enemies, as follows:

are sworn against me: laid themselves under a curse, to do him all the mischief they could, and it may be to take away his life; as those who swear they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul, (~~423D~~ Acts 23:12) or they swear to lies, false charges and accusations brought against him, like those that Jezebel suborned against Naboth: or "they swear by me" ^{f1418}; as the words may be rendered; they swear by his calamities and distresses, and wished they might be as he was, if they did not do so and so; and took his name for a curse.

Ver. 9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread*, etc.] He sitting in ashes, as Job did, and rolling himself in them in the manner of mourners; and, having no other table than the ground to eat his food upon, he might eat ashes along

with it; and by an hypallage of the words, the sense may be, that he ate bread like ashes, no more savoured and relished it, or was nourished by it, than if he had eaten ashes; the meaning is, that he was fed with the bread of adversity, and water of affliction:

and mingled my drink with weeping; that is, with tears; as he drank, the tears ran down his cheeks, and mixed with the liquor in his cup; he was fed with the bread of tears, and had them to drink in great measure; these were his meat and his drink, day and night, while enemies reproached him, swore at him, against him, and by him; (see ^{<1815>}Psalm 80:5 42:3).

Ver. 10. *Because of thine indignation and thy wrath*, etc.] This was the burden of his complaint, what gave him the greatest uneasiness; not so much the reproach of his enemies, and his other outward afflictions, as the sense he had of God's wrath and indignation. The people of God are as deserving of his wrath as others; and when they are awakened to a sense of sin and danger, or the law enters into their consciences, it works wrath there, and leaves nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, till comfort is given; and under afflictive providences they are very ready to conclude, that the wrath of God is upon them; but this is only their apprehension of things; it is not in reality: for God has not appointed them to wrath, and has sworn he will not be wroth with them; Christ has bore it for them, in their room and stead; and being justified by his blood and righteousness, they are saved from it; but then the sense they have of it is very terrible, and there is no rest, peace, and comfort in their souls, while under the apprehensions of it:

for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down; as a man that, in wrestling, has the advantage of his antagonist, lifts him up as high as he can, that he may throw him with the greater force upon the ground; in like manner the psalmist thought the Lord was dealing with him: or this may express his changeable state and condition, sometimes lifted up, and sometimes cast down, and which is the case of every believer, more or less; all have their liftings up, and their castings down: when God first calls them by his grace, he raises them from a low estate, lifts them up out of an horrible pit, takes them from the dunghill, sets them among princes to inherit the throne of glory: when he comforts them with the consolations of his Spirit, he is the lifter up of their heads; when he grants his presence, and lifts up the light of his countenance: when he discovers his love, and makes their mountain to stand strong; when he shows them their interest in himself, as their

covenant God, in Christ, as their Redeemer and Saviour, and grants them the communion of the Holy Ghost; and when their graces are in lively exercise, then is it a time of lifting up: and they are cast down when corruptions prevail, when grace is weak, when God hides his face, and when afflictions lie heavy on them: this was now the case of the psalmist, and perhaps the remembrance of his liftings up in former times was an aggravation of it.

Ver. 11. *My days are like a shadow that declineth*, etc.] Or, “that is stretched out”^{f1419}, which, though it may appear long, is soon at an end; as it does appear longer when the sun sets^{f1420}, and departs from the earth: he reckons his life not by months and years, but by days; and these he compares to a “shadow”, which has no substance in it; his age being as nothing before the Lord, and has much darkness and obscurity in it; his days being days of darkness, affliction, and trouble, and quickly gone, as man’s life is; there is no abiding; (see ^{<1395>}1 Chronicles 29:15 ^{<1842>}Job 14:2). Pindar^{f1421} calls man the dream of a shadow:

and I am withered like grass; which in the morning is flourishing, is cut down at noon, and withered at evening: this is the case of all flesh, however beautiful and goodly it may look; it is weak, frail, and mortal; cannot stand before the force of afflictions, which quickly consume strength and beauty, and much less before the scythe of death; (see ^{<1905>}Psalm 90:5,6 ^{<2306>}Isaiah 40:6-8).

Ver. 12. *But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever*, etc.] This address is made to Christ, as is clear from (^{<1925>}Psalm 102:25-27), compared with (^{<3010>}Hebrews 1:10-12), who is a divine Person, endures for ever, is from everlasting to everlasting, unchangeably the same in his love, power, wisdom, faithfulness, etc. and though he died as man, he will die no more; he is alive, and lives for evermore; and because he lives, his people shall live also; and he will come again to take them to himself: and, as Mediator, he is King for ever; always continues, as such, to rule over, protect, and defend his people; and is a Priest for ever, and ever lives to make intercession for them; and his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, have a constant virtue in them, to take away sin, and secure from it: the consideration of the perpetuity of Christ, in his person and offices, was a comfort to the psalmist under his troubles, and in a view of his own declining state: the Targum is,

“but thou, O Lord, thy habitation continues for ever in heaven:”

and thy remembrance to all generations; the remembrance of his name Jehovah, or Jesus, or Immanuel, or any other, is sweet and precious to his saints in all ages; and so the remembrance of his works, of what he has done and suffered, especially the great work of redemption; for the remembrance of which the ordinance of the Lord's supper is appointed to be continued till his second coming; and his Gospel is an everlasting one, which will transmit the memory of him to men in every age, to the end of the world; and though all flesh is as grass, and every man dies, even the ministers of the word, yet that itself lives for ever. Aben Ezra reads "thy throne", as agreeing with (Lam 5:19), but Kimchi observes that this reading is owing to a bad copy.

Ver. 13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy on Zion*, etc.] Exert his power, and display the riches of his grace and mercy; not by delivering the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, to which some restrain it; but by redeeming his church and people by power and price; or rather by raising up and restoring them to great glory and prosperity in the latter day:

for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; not the seventy years of the captivity made known to the prophet Jeremiah; rather the seventy weeks of Daniel fixed for the Messiah's coming; or the fulness of time agreed upon, between Christ and his Father, for him to come and redeem his people; but it may best of all design the end of the forty two months, or the 1260 days, or years, fixed for the treading under foot the holy city, for the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, and for the reign of antichrist; which when come will usher in glorious times in favour of Zion, the church of God, (⁶⁶¹⁰Revelation 11:2,3 13:5).

Ver. 14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones*, etc.] Meaning not Cyrus and Darius, who gave leave and orders for the rebuilding of the city and temple of Jerusalem, as some; nor Nehemiah, and Ezra, and others, who took more pleasure in the stones and rubbish of the temple, as it lay in ruins, than in all the stately palaces in Babylon; and who were very desirous of, and took delight in gathering these stones, and putting them together again, as others; but, the ministers of the Gospel, and other Christians, in the latter day, who will take pleasure in the great number of converts that there will then be, who, as lively stones, will be built up a spiritual house; and especially when those stones shall be laid with fair colours, and the headstone shall be brought in with acclamations, crying, Grace, grace unto it; (see ⁶⁸¹⁶1 Peter 2:5 ²⁸⁴²Isaiah 54:12 ³⁸⁴⁷Zechariah 4:7).

and favour the dust thereof; which sometimes designs multitudes, (^{<04230>}Numbers 23:10), perhaps here it may denote the meanest of the Lord's people, who will be regarded, and not despised by his servants; but they will show favour to them, do them all the good they can, and wish well to them, and pray for their prosperity, and for the peace of Zion; that God would make it the joy of the whole earth; and when there shall be such a delight in the stones and dust of Zion, and a spirit of grace and supplication poured forth upon the servants of the Lord, to pray for the promised glory and happiness of it, it will be a token for good, and an intimation that the set time to favour her is at hand; which seems to be the sense of the psalmist: such great reverence and respect have the greatest of the wise men among the Jews for the land of Israel, literally understood, that they kiss the borders, the stones of it, and roll themselves in its dust^{f1422}, having perhaps in mind this passage of Scripture.

Ver. 15. *So the Heathen shall fear the name of the Lord*, etc.] Whose name is reverend, and to be feared; especially the glorious and fearful name "Jehovah", expressive of the divine existence, of his eternity and immutability; though the name of the Lord frequently signifies himself, and here particularly the Messiah, the Son of God, in whom the name of the Lord is; the King of saints, whom all men will fear in the latter day, when the set time to favour Zion is come; will stand in awe of him, be careful of offending him, and will serve and worship him; even the very Heathen, who knew not God, and had no fear of him before their eyes, or in their hearts; the Pagan nations, whose kingdoms will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; (see ^{<6115>}Revelation 11:15 15:3,4)

and all the kings of the earth thy glory; which may be supplied thus, either "all the kings of the earth shall see thy glory", or shall fear thee because of "thy glory"; the glory of Christ's person, as the Son of God; the glory of his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King; especially the glory of his kingly office, to which that of the kings of the earth is not to be compared; the glory of his works of creation, providence, and redemption; and as it will be held forth in the Gospel, with which the earth will now be full, and so be filled with the glory of the Lord, (^{<19729>}Psalms 72:19), and will be so remarkable and conspicuous as to be taken notice of by the kings of the earth, even by all of them, who, when the glory of the Lord shall be risen in Zion, will come to the brightness of it, and look upon it, and admire it, and fear because of it, (^{<2800>}Isaiah 60:1,3).

Ver. 16. *When the Lord shall build up Zion*, etc.] The church of God, fallen down, and in a ruinous condition, as it may be said to be when the doctrines of the Gospel are departed from; the ordinances of it are corrupted and altered, or not attended to; the worship and discipline of the Lord's house are neglected; great declensions in faith, love, and zeal, among the professors of religion, and but few instances of conversion: and it may be said to be built up again, as it will be in the latter day, when the doctrines of grace will be revived; the ordinances will be administered in their primitive purity; great spirituality, holiness, and brotherly love, among the saints, and large numbers converted and brought into it: and this will be the work of Christ, the great master builder; the materials of this building are the saints, those lively stones which will now be laid with fair colours; the ministers of the word will be the instruments that Christ will make use of in rebuilding his church; it is his Spirit, power, and grace, which will make all effectual; and he will have the glory, as follows: the Targum is,

“for the city of Zion is built by the Word of the Lord:”

he shall appear in his glory; or “shall be seen in his glory”,^{f1423} which will be upon his church and people, and on which there will be a defence, so that it shall continue; and this will lie chiefly in the purity of Gospel truths, ordinances, and worship; in the number of converts; in the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God upon them; in their peace, prosperity, unity, and spirituality; and in the presence of Christ with them, who will be seen in all the glory and majesty of his kingly office; he will now reign before his ancients gloriously.

Ver. 17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute*, etc.] Of the destitute of human help and support, protection and defence; as the church in the wilderness; of the “poor”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions, both in spirit and in purse; of the “humble”, as the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin: the word^{f1424} signifies a low shrub or plant; it is rendered, the heath in the wilderness, (²⁴⁷⁶Jeremiah 17:6) and designs the saints in their low and afflicted state, during the reign of antichrist, and while the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; these are the elect that pray day and night, and give the Lord no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth; and the prayers of these are regarded and looked to by the Lord; his eyes are upon and his ears are open to these praying ones; and all the glorious things which shall be done for the church of God will be in consequence of their prayers:

and not despise their prayer; not reject it with contempt and abhorrence; more is intended than is expressed: the meaning is, that he will receive it with pleasure, and return an answer to it; the prayer of these poor destitute ones is delightful to him, (~~2158~~ Proverbs 15:8).

Ver. 18. *This shall be written for the generation to come*, etc.] This prayer, as the Targum paraphrases it, is a directory to saints in distressed circumstances; or that which was just now said, that the Lord will regard, and not despise the prayer of the destitute; this shall stand on record, for the encouragement of praying souls in all generations; or this whole prophecy, concerning the glory of the church in the latter day; this shall be written for the next generation, and so on until it is accomplished, to keep up the faith and expectation of the fulfilment of it:

and the people which shall be created: born at the time when all this shall be done; or who shall become new creatures; be created in Christ Jesus, and made new men;

these shall praise the Lord, when he shall arise and have mercy on Zion; when he shall favour and rebuild her, in answer to the prayers of his people; then their prayers will be turned into praise; then will those voices be heard among them, hallelujah, salvation, glory, honour, and power unto the Lord our God, (~~6801~~ Revelation 19:1).

Ver. 19. *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary*, etc.] From heaven, as it is explained in the next clause, which is the Lord's sanctuary, or holy place, where he dwells, even in the height of it; it is both high and holy, as he himself is; yet he condescends to look down from thence on sinful mortals:

from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; the inhabitants of it, good and bad: it designs the general notice he takes of men and things in a providential way; he beholds the world, that lies in wickedness, and all the wickedness committed in it; and will one day call to an account, and punish for it; he beholds good men, not only with an eye of providence, to take care of them, protect and defend, but with an eye of love, grace, and mercy; he has a special and distinct knowledge of them, and it may here particularly regard the notice he takes of his people, under antichristian tyranny; he sees all the barbarity and cruelty exercised upon them, and will requite it, ere long, to their adversaries, and free them from it, as follows.

Ver. 20. *To hear the groanings of the prisoner*, etc.] Not of a single person only, but of many, who lie in prisons in Popish countries, especially in the Inquisition; where they lie and groan, in darkness and misery, under dreadful tortures; their cries and groans the Lord hears; his heart yearns towards them; he looks with pity on them; and, because of the sighing of these poor and needy ones, he will arise in due time, and set them in safety from him that puffs at them: it is true also of such who are prisoners of sin, Satan, and the law; and, when sensible of it, groan under their bondage, and cry to the Lord for help, who hears them, and directs them, as prisoners of hope, to turn to Christ, their strong hold, (^{301B}Zechariah 9:11,12),

to loose those that are appointed to death; delivered to death, as the Targum; delivered over to the secular power, in order to be put to death; who are arraigned and condemned as malefactors, and put into the condemned hole, in order for execution; these the Lord will loose, and save them from the death they are appointed to by men; for this is not to be understood of persons appointed by the Lord to death, either corporeal or eternal, from which none can be loosed, so appointed: in the original text the phrase is “children of death”^{f1425}; the same as “children of wrath”, (^{401B}Ephesians 2:3), that is, deserving of death, and under the sentence of it; as all men are in Adam, even the Lord’s own people; and who are, in their own apprehension, as dead men, when awakened and convinced of their state by the Spirit of God; these Christ looses from the shackles and fetters of sin, from the bondage of the law, from the tyranny of Satan, and from fears of death, and puts them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Ver. 21. *To declare the name of the Lord in Zion*, etc.] That is, that the prisoners and persons appointed to death, being loosed, might declare, in the church, what great things the Lord has done for them; and so speak well of his wisdom, power, grace, and goodness, in their deliverance; profess his name, and confess him before men, and express a value for his name, and show forth the honour of it, and seek his glory:

and his praise in Jerusalem; the Gospel church state, the same with Zion; when it shall be the praise of the whole earth; then and there will those, that are delivered from the antichristian yoke, praise the Lord, sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and glorify God for all that he has done for them.

Ver. 22. *When the people are gathered together*, etc.] When the people of the Jews shall be gathered together, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King, the Messiah, and appoint them one head, even Christ; and when the Gentiles shall gather together, in great numbers, to the church of God, (^{<3011>}Hosea 1:11 3:5 ^{<2304>}Isaiah 60:4-8),

and the kingdoms to serve the Lord; even the kingdoms of this world, which will become his, and will serve him in righteousness and holiness, freely and cheerfully, with one shoulder and one content; their kings will fall down before the Lord, and all nations shall serve him, (^{<49721>}Psalm 72:11), and then will be the time when the prisoners shall be loosed, and the Lord shall be praised in Zion.

Ver. 23. *He weakened my strength in the way*, etc.] The psalmist here returns to his complaint of his afflictions, weakness, and frailty, which ended (^{<19421>}Psalm 102:11), after which some hints are given of the latter day glory, which though he despaired of seeing, by reason of his frailty and mortality, yet comforts himself with the eternity and immutability of Christ, and that there would be a succession of the church, a seed of true believers, who would see and enjoy it: as for himself, he says that God (for he is that “He”, and not the enemy, as some) had “weakened” his “strength in the way”, by afflictions, as the word ^{f1426} signifies; which weakens the strength and vigour of the mind, and discourages and dispirits it, and enfeebles the body: many are the afflictions which the people of God meet with in the course of their life, in their way to heaven, which have such an effect upon them; through many tribulations they pass to enter the kingdom, as the Israelites in their way to Canaan, and Christ to glory: some think the psalmist represents the Jews in their return from the Babylonish captivity, meeting with difficulties and discouragements in the way; rather the church of God, in the expectation of the Messiah, who, because his coming was delayed, grew feeble in their faith and hope, had weak hands and feeble knees, which needed strengthening by fresh promises: though it may be, best of all, the people of God, waiting for latter day glory, enfeebled by the persecutions of antichrist, or grown weak in the exercises of their grace, faith, hope, and love; which will be their case before these glorious times, and now is, (see ^{<6182>}Revelation 3:2,8),

he shortened my days; which he thought he should live, and expected he would; and which, according to the course of nature, and the common term of man’s life, he might, in all human appearance, have lived; otherwise,

with respect to the decree of God, which has fixed the bounds of man's days, they cannot be shorter or longer than they are, (^{<3845>}Job 14:5).

Ver. 24. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days;* etc.]

Which was always reckoned as a judgment, as a token of God's sore displeasure, and as what only befell wicked men, (^{<3953>}Psalms 55:23), in the Hebrew it is, "cause me not to ascend"^{f1427}; either as smoke, which ascends, and vanishes away; or rather it designs the separation of the soul from the body at death, when it ascends upwards to God that gave it; so Aben Ezra compares it with (^{<2117>}Ecclesiastes 12:7), the Targum is,

"do not take me out of the world in the midst of my days, bring me to the world to come:"

some, who think that Daniel was the penman of this psalm, or some other, about the time of the Babylonish captivity, curiously observe, that that period was much about the middle between the building of Solomon's temple and the coming of Christ, the antitype of it; which was about a thousand years, of which four hundred and ninety were to come, according to Daniel's weeks; so, representing the church, prays they might not be destroyed, as such; but be continued till the Messiah came:

thy years are throughout all generations; which are not as men's years, of the same measure or number; but are boundless and infinite: the phrase is expressive of the eternity of God, or Christ; which the psalmist opposes to his own frailty, and which he illustrates in the following verses, by setting it in contrast with the discontinuance and changeableness of the heavens and the earth; (see ^{<3805>}Job 10:5 36:26).

Ver. 25. *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth,* etc.] The lower part of the creation, the Lord's footstool, called the earth beneath: this has its foundation; though what it is cannot be well said, it cannot be searched out; it is sometimes said to be founded upon the waters, and yet so as not to be removed for ever, (^{<2637>}Jeremiah 31:37 ^{<3942>}Psalms 24:2 104:5), this shows the wisdom of God, as a wise master builder, and the stability of the earth; and is a proof of the deity of Christ, to whom these words belong: this is said to be done "of old", or "at" or "in the beginning", as Jarchi and the Targum; and so in (^{<3010>}Hebrews 1:10), where they are applied to the Messiah, the Son of God; and this, as it proves the eternity of Christ, who must be in the beginning, and before all things, so it confutes the notion of the eternity of the earth, received by some philosophers: besides, the words

may be rendered, “before”^{f1428} “thou foundest the earth”; and so refers to the preceding, “thy years”, etc. were before the earth was; that is, from eternity, and so fully express the eternal existence of Christ:

and the heavens are the work of thy hands; these are the airy and starry heavens, and the heaven of heavens; which are creatures, and not to be worshipped, made by Christ himself, and are expressive of his power, wisdom, and glory.

Ver. 26. *They shall perish*, etc.] Both the heavens and the earth, though so well founded, and so firmly made; they shall be dissolved, melt, and pass away; not as to the substance, but as to the quality of them: or, as R. Judah Ben David says, whom Aben Ezra on the place cites, and calls the first grammarian in the west, not as to generals, but as to particulars:

but thou shalt endure; as the eternal God, from everlasting to everlasting; and, even as man, he will die no more; and, as Mediator, will ever remain; he will be King for ever; his throne is for ever and ever; his kingdom is an everlasting one; he is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek; his sacrifice is of an eternal efficacy, and he ever lives to make intercession for his people; he will always continue, as the Prophet, in his church, to teach by his Spirit, word, and ordinances, in the present state; and hereafter will be the light of the New Jerusalem, and of his saints, for ever:

yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: not only the heavens, which are as a curtain and garment about the earth, but the earth itself, (⁻²⁵⁰⁶Isaiah 51:6), will lose their beauty and glory, and become useless, as to the present form of them:

as a vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be changed; as to their form, as a garment that is turned or folded up, and laid aside, as to present use: this seems to favour the above sense given, that the earth and heavens will not perish, as to the substance of them; but as to their form, figure, fashion, and scheme; and as to the qualities of them, all noxious ones being purged away by fire, the curse removed, and new heavens and new earth arise out of them.

Ver. 27. *But thou art the same*, etc.] That hast created them, as the Targum adds; or “thou art he”^{f1429}, the everlasting I AM, the unchangeable Jehovah; immutable in his nature and perfections; in his love and affections to his people; in his power to protect and keep them; in his wisdom to guide and direct them; in his righteousness to clothe them, and render them

acceptable to God; in his blood to cleanse them, and speak peace and pardon to them; in his fulness to supply them, and in his intercession for them,

and thy years shall have no end; (see Gill on “~~Psalm~~ Psalm 102:24”), now he, that made the heavens and the earth, and will be when they will not be, especially in the present form they are, must be able to rebuild his Zion, and bring on the glory he has promised; and from his eternity and immutability may be concluded the continuance of his church and interest in the world, until all the glorious things spoken of it shall be fulfilled, as follows.

Ver. 28. *The children of thy servants shall continue*, etc.] The “servants” of the Lord are the apostles of Christ, and ministers of the word, in all successive generations, with whom Christ will be to the end of the world: their “children” are such whom they have begotten again, through the Gospel, to whom they are spiritual fathers; regenerated souls are meant; of these there will be a succession in all ages, until latter day glory takes place; these are the church’s seed, and her seed’s seed, from whom the word of the Lord, the Gospel, will never depart, (~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 59:21), or these “shall inhabit”^{f1430}, as the word may be rendered, the earth, as the Targum adds; that is, the new heavens, and the new earth, when the old ones are passed away; here they shall dwell with the Lord, who is the same today, yesterday, and for ever:

and their seed shall be established before thee; the same with the children, the spiritual seed of the church and of faithful minister; these, with the church, in which they are born and brought up, shall be established in Christ; the church will be no more in an unstable and fluctuating state, but will be as a tabernacle, that shall not be taken down; yea, shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills; (see ~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 2:2 33:20).