

PSALM 103

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 103

A Psalm of David.

The Targum adds,

“spoken in prophecy,”

as doubtless it was, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Some think it was written by David, after a fit of illness, and his recovery from it, since he speaks of his diseases being healed, and his youth renewed; for which reason the Syriac interpreter suggests it was written in his old age; for he makes the subject of the psalm to be,

“concerning coldness which prevailed upon him in old age;”

but rather he wrote it when his heart was warm with a sense of the love of God, and spiritual blessings of grace flowing from thence; and in it celebrates and sings the benefits of New Testament times; and it is a psalm suitable to be sung by every believer, under a quick sense of divine favours: wherefore the above interpreter better adds,

“also an instruction and thanksgiving by men of God;”

whom the psalmist may very well be thought to personate, even in Gospel times; and much rather than the Jews in captivity, as Kimchi thinks.

Ver. 1. *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, etc.] His better part, his soul, which comes immediately from God, and returns to him, which is immaterial and immortal, and of more worth than the world: God is to be served with the best we have; as with the best of our substance, so with the best of our persons; and it is the heart, or soul, which he requires to be given him; and such service as is performed with the soul or spirit is most agreeable to him; he being a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit and in truth: unless the spirit or soul of a man, is engaged in the service of God, it is of little avail; for bodily exercise profiteth not; preaching, hearing, praying, and praising, should be both with the spirit, and with the

understanding: here the psalmist calls upon his soul to “bless” the Lord; not by invoking or conferring a blessing on him, which as it is impossible to be done, so he stands in no need of it, being God, all sufficient, and blessed for evermore; but by proclaiming and congratulating his blessedness, and by giving him thanks for all mercies, spiritual and temporal:


and all that is within me, bless his holy name; meaning not only all within his body, his heart, reins, lungs, etc. but all within his soul, all the powers and faculties of it; his understanding, will, affections, and judgment; and all the grace that was wrought in him, faith, hope, love, joy, and the like; these he would have all concerned and employed in praising the name of the Lord; which is exalted above all blessing and praise; is great and glorious in all the earth, by reason of his works wrought, and blessings of goodness bestowed; and which appears to be holy in them all, as it does in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; at the remembrance of which holiness thanks should be given; for he that is glorious in holiness is fearful in praises, (^{<1972>}Psalm 97:12 ^{<251>}Exodus 15:11).

Ver. 2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul*, etc.] Which is repeated to show the importance of the service, and the vehement desire of the psalmist, that his soul should be engaged in it:

and forget not all his benefits; not any of them; the least of them are not to be forgotten, being such as men are altogether unworthy of; they flow not from the merit of men, but from the mercy of God; and they are many, even innumerable; they are new every morning, and continue all the day; and how great must the sum of them be, and not one should be forgotten; and yet even good men are very apt to forget them; as the Israelites of old, who sung the praises of the Lord, and soon forgot his works: the Lord, knowing the weakness of his people’s memories, has not only, under the Gospel dispensation, appointed an ordinance, to be continued to the end of the world, to commemorate a principal blessing and benefit of his, redemption by his Son; but has also promised his Spirit, to bring all things to their remembrance; and this they should be concerned for, that they do remember what God has done for them, in order both to show gratitude and thankfulness to him, and for the encouragement of their faith and hope in him.

Ver. 3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities*, etc.] The psalmist explains here what he means by benefits, and gives a particular enumeration of them; and begins with the blessing of pardon, which is a special and peculiar benefit;

it is according to the riches of divine grace, and the multitude of tender mercies; without which all outward blessings signify nothing; and, without a sense of this, a man is not in a suitable and proper frame to bless the Lord; and this being the first benefit a soul sensible of sin, its guilt and is concerned for, and seeks after; so enjoying it, it is the first he is thankful for: this is rightly ascribed to God; for none can forgive sins but he; and what he forgives are not mere infirmities, peccadillos, the lesser sins of life; but “iniquities”, grosser sins, unrighteousnesses, impieties, the most enormous crimes, sins of a crimson and scarlet die; yea, “all” of them, though they are many, more than the hairs of a man’s head; he abundantly pardons, multiplies pardons, as sins are multiplied, and leaves none unforgiven; original sin, actual sins, sins of heart, lip, and life, of omission and commission, all are forgiven for Christ’s sake: and the special mercy is when a man has an application of this to himself, and can say to his soul, as David to his, God has forgiven “thine” iniquities; for though it may be observed with pleasure, and it is an encouragement to hope in the Lord, that he is a forgiving God, and has forgiven others, yet what would this avail a man, if his sins should not be forgiven? the sweetness of the blessing lies in its being brought home to a man’s own soul: and it may be further observed, that this is a continued act; it is not said who has forgiven, and will forgive, though both are true; but “forgiveth”, continues to forgive; for as there is a continual virtue in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, and in his blood to cleanse from all sin, so there is a continual flow of pardoning grace in the heart of God, which is afresh applied to the consciences of his people by his Spirit; and this is a blessing to be thankful for:

who healeth all thy diseases; not bodily ones, though the Lord is the physician of the bodies as well as of the souls of men, and sometimes heals the diseases of soul and body at once, as in the case of the paralytic man in the Gospel; but spiritual diseases, or soul maladies, are here meant; the same with “iniquities” in the preceding clause: sin is a natural, hereditary, epidemical, nauseous, and mortal disease; and there are many of them, a complication of them, in men, which God only can cure; and he heals them by his word, by means of his Gospel, preaching peace, pardon, and righteousness by Christ; by the blood, wounds, and stripes of his Son; by the application of pardoning grace and mercy; for healing diseases, and forgiving iniquities, are one and the same thing; (see  Isaiah 33:24), and this the Lord does freely, fully, and infallibly, and for which thanks are due

unto him; and it would be very ungrateful, and justly resented, should they not be returned to him; (see ^{<42715>}Luke 17:15-18).

Ver. 4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction*, etc.] Not from temporal destruction, to which the natural life is subject, through diseases, dangerous occurrences, and the malice of enemies; to be delivered from which is a blessing, and for which God is to be praised; but from eternal destruction, the destruction of the body and soul in hell; and so the Targum,

“who redeemest thy life from hell;”

to which destruction all men are liable through sin; their ways lead unto it, and grace only prevents it: the people of God are redeemed from sin, the cause of it; and from the curse of the law, in the execution of which it lies; and from Satan, the executor of it; and all this by Christ, who is the Redeemer appointed and sent, and who being mighty, and so equal to the work, has obtained eternal redemption; through which the saints are secure from going down to the pit of destruction, or from wrath to come; and this is a blessing they can never be enough thankful for; (see ^{<41165>}Luke 1:68 ^{<41165>}Revelation 5:9),

who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; with all other blessings which flow from the lovingkindness and tender mercy of God, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David; all the spiritual blessings with which the saints are blessed in Christ, the grace given them in him, and the mercy kept with him for evermore; all things pertaining to life and godliness given in regeneration; the fruits of great love and abundant mercy, with all the other supplies of grace between that and eternal glory: “crowning” with these denotes an application and enjoyment of them, the great plenty and abundance of them, a being surrounded and loaded with them; as also the honour that goes along with them, which makes those that have them great and glorious, rich and honourable; as well as preservation and protection by them; these encompassing about as a crown the head, and as a shield the body; (see ^{<41612>}Psalm 5:12), where the same word is used as here.

Ver. 5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things*, etc.] With the good things in the heart of God, with his favour and lovingkindness, as with marrow and fatness; with the good things in the hands of Christ, with the fulness of grace in him, with pardon, righteousness, and salvation by him;

with the good things of the Spirit of God, his gifts and graces; and with the provisions of the Lord's house, the goodness and fatness of it; these he shows unto his people, creates hungerings and thirstings in them after them, sets their hearts a longing after them, and then fills and satisfies them with them: hence the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions render it, "who filleth thy desire with good things": the word used has sometimes the signification of an ornament; wherefore Aben Ezra interprets it of the soul, which is the glory and ornament of the body, and renders it, "who satisfieth thy soul with good things"; which is not amiss: "so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's"; not the youth of the body, or the juvenile vigour of it; nor the outward prosperity of it; but the youth of grace, or a renewal of spiritual love and affection to divine and heavenly persons and things; of holy zeal for God, his ways and worship; for Christ, his Gospel, truths, and ordinances; of spiritual joy and comfort, strength, liveliness, and activity, as formerly were in the days of espousals, in the youth of first conversion, or when first made acquainted with the best things; so that though the outward man may decay, yet the inward man is renewed day by day: and this is said to be "like the eagle's", whose youth and strength are renewed, as some observe ^{f1431}, by dropping their feathers, and having new ones, by feeding upon the blood of slain creatures; and whereas, when they are grown old, the upper part of their bill grows over the lower part ^{f1432}, so that they are not able, to eat, but must die through want; Austin ^{f1433} says, that by rubbing it against a rock, it comes to its use of eating, and so recovers its strength: but there is no need to have recourse to any of these things; for as the old age of an eagle is lively and vigorous, like the youth of another creature; so it is here signified, that saints through the grace of God, even in old age, become fat and flourishing, and fruitful, and are steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, run and are not weary, walk and faint not, (²⁴¹⁸Isaiah 40:31), all which are inestimable mercies, and the Lord is to be praised for them.

Ver. 6. *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*] Not only for the Israelites oppressed by the Egyptians, though the psalmist might have them in his view, by what follows; for whom the Lord did justice, by delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, and by punishing Pharaoh and his people, and bringing down judgments upon them, both in Egypt and at the Red sea; but for all other oppressed ones in common, the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, who are often oppressed by the rich and mighty; the Lord judges their cause, and does

them right, and frees them from their oppression; and so all good men who are oppressed by tyrannical princes and cruel persecutors, and all such whom the man of the earth, the man of sin, antichrist, oppresses, (~~9008~~Psalm 10:18) and all those who are oppressed by the devil, buffeted by Satan, and bore down with his temptations; the Lord rebukes him in his own time, and delivers his people out of his hands; which is matter of praise and thankfulness: the psalmist, in this verse and the following, passes to the consideration of the good things God did for others, in order to keep up a warm sense of divine goodness upon his heart.

Ver. 7. *He made known his ways unto Moses*, etc.] The ways in which he himself walks, the steps and methods which he has taken to show forth his glory; his way in creation, and the order of it, as in (~~0000~~Genesis 1:1-31), for though, by the light of nature, it might be known that God created all things; yet, without a revelation from him, it could never have been known in what manner he made them, and the peculiar work of each of the six days, in which they were made; this was made known to Moses; as also his way in providence, which sometimes is in the deep, and past finding out: Moses was made acquainted with the methods of divine Providence, with many special instances of it, relating both to himself in his infancy and in riper years, and to the people of Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan's land; and the Lord likewise made known unto him his way of grace and mercy, life and salvation, by Christ, which he desired to show him, and he did, (~~02313~~Exodus 33:13,18,19 34:6,7). Christ was made known to him, as the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head, as God's salvation, old Jacob waited for: he was shown him in the types of the passover lamb, the brasen serpent, and the rock in the wilderness, and in other things; the way of atonement, by the sacrifice of Christ, was made known to him through the sacrifices which he from God enjoined the people of Israel: hence he wrote of Christ, and of what he should do and suffer; and so fully, that the Apostle Paul said no other things than what he did, (~~03546~~John 5:46 ~~04022~~Acts 26:22,23) moreover, the Lord made known to him the ways in which he would have him and the people of Israel to walk; the way of his commandments, his statutes and ordinances; which were made known to him, to deliver to them, and was a peculiar favour, (~~04719~~Psalm 147:19,20),

his acts unto the children of Israel; his works, his wonderful works; his plagues on their enemies the Egyptians; his redemption of them out of the house of bondage; his leading them through the Red sea as on dry land; his

feeding them with manna in the wilderness, protecting them from their enemies, bringing them into the land of Canaan, and settling them there; (see ^{<5781>}Psalm 78:11,12 ^{<630>}Deuteronomy 29:2,3).

Ver. 8. *The Lord is merciful and gracious*, etc.] So he made himself known to Moses, (^{<246>}Exodus 34:6), and so David found him to be, and therefore calls upon his soul to bless his name. God is “merciful” in the most tender and affectionate manner; he has bowels of mercy, which yearn towards his people, as those of a tender parent to its child, as the word signifies; his mercy is free, without any motive or merit in men to engage it; he delights in showing it; he constantly bestows it; it is the source of all good things; it is communicated through Christ; all mercies temporal and spiritual come by him; and this lays a foundation for faith and hope: and he is gracious, as appears in the eternal choice of his people to salvation; in providing a Saviour and a ransom for them; in giving all grace and the blessings of it to them in his Son; in giving him for them, and all things to them with him; in justifying them by his righteousness; in pardoning their sins for his sake; in taking them into his family; in regenerating, calling, preserving, and saving them:

slow to anger, or “longsuffering” ^{f1434}; even to wicked men, to the vessels of wrath, to the old world, yea, to Jezebel, to whom he gave space to repent; which longsuffering being abused and despised, is an aggravation of condemnation: but rather here it intends God’s longsuffering to his people, as before conversion, waiting till the time comes that he is gracious to them; and after conversion, notwithstanding their backslidings and revoltings; and this longsuffering is their salvation:

and plenteous in mercy; large and abundant in it, as appears by the various instances of it, and ways and methods in which he shows it; in election, in the covenant, in redemption, in regeneration, in pardon and eternal life; and by the abundance of it which he bestows on every one of his people; and by the vast numbers which do partake of it.

Ver. 9. *He will not always chide*, etc.] He sometimes does chide his children, though never but when they have done a fault; always for their sins, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and to depart from them; not for chiding sake, as some parents, to gratify their passion and ill humour, who correct for their own pleasure; but the Lord chides and corrects for the profit of his children, that they may be partakers of his holiness; he ever does it for their good, but he will not always chide,

or continue it ever: or “he will not always contend”^{f1435}, strive with them, litigate a point with them, hold out a controversy, not being able to stand before him; he knows their frame, their weakness, and frailty; (see ^{<25716>}Isaiah 57:16),

neither will he keep his anger for ever; though he does with the wicked, yet not with his own people; that endures but for a moment, and is rather seeming than real; and what does appear is soon turned away; he does not retain it long, he is quickly pacified towards them for all they have done, and smiles again upon them, (^{<30718>}Micah 7:18).

Ver. 10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins*, etc.] God deals with his people, and deals with them roundly, for their sins, reprovng them by his Spirit, and by his ministers, and by his chastising rod; but not after or according to them, or as they deserve; in this David acknowledges himself and other saints, with whom he joins, to be sinners, to have been guilty of sins, as none live without them; and that God had taken notice of them, and chastised them for them; but in great moderation, and not according to the due demerit of them:

nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; had he, if every transgression had received its just recompence of reward, they must have been sent to hell; the lake burning with fire and brimstone must have been their portion; the wages of sin is eternal death: the reason why God deals not with nor rewards his people according to the due desert of their sins is because Christ has bore them, and the chastisement of them, and made satisfaction to divine justice for them; (see ^{<45013>}Ezra 9:13).

Ver. 11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth*, etc.] Which is the greatest distance known, or can be conceived of; the space between the heaven and the earth is seemingly almost infinite; and nothing can more illustrate the mercy of God, which reaches to the heavens, and is in heaven; though this is but a faint representation of the largeness and abundance of it, and which indeed is boundless and infinite:

so great is his mercy towards them that fear him, or, his mercy hath prevailed over them that fear him^{f1436}; as the waters of the flood prevailed upon the earth, and reached and overflowed the highest hills, (^{<000718>}Genesis 7:18), so abundant and superabundant is the grace of God over them that “fear” him. Which character is given, not as being the cause of their obtaining mercy, but as descriptive of the persons that partake of it; on

whom it has such an effect, as to cause them to fear the Lord, and his goodness; and is mentioned to prevent obstinate and presumptuous sinners expecting it, or trusting to it.

Ver. 12. *As far as the east is from the west*, etc.] Which Kimchi thinks is mentioned because it contains the length of the habitable world; and therefore it is not said as far as the north is from the south; since a man can go from east to west, but not from north to south, because of the extreme heat and cold. But this distance is not given with respect to those opposite parts of the earth, which scarcely exceed 12700 miles; but with respect to those opposite points in the heavens: and the meaning is, that as far as the eastern point of the heavens is from the western point of them; which more illustrates the matter in hand, or the blessing later mentioned, than the other.

So far hath he removed our transgressions from us; which removed men and angels from God, and set them at a distance from him; and which, if not removed, are such burdens as must sink men down into the lowest hell; and yet cannot be removed by anything that they can do; not by any sacrifices, services, or duties of any kind; nor in any other way, nor by any other person, than the Lord himself: and this is to be understood not of a removal of the being of sin out of his people, for that is not done in this life; rather of the removal of the guilt of sin, by a special application of pardoning grace and mercy; see (^{<10213>}2 Samuel 12:13 ^{<3004>}Zechariah 3:4), but, best of all, of a removal of sins to Christ, and of them by his sacrifice and satisfaction: Christ engaged as a surety for his people; Jehovah the Father considered him as such; and therefore did not impute their sins to them, but to him; and when he sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh, he removed them from them, and laid them upon him; who voluntarily took them on himself, cheerfully bore them, and, by bearing them, removed the iniquity of the land in one day; and carried them away to the greatest distance, and even put them away for ever by the sacrifice of himself; and upon the satisfaction he gave to divine justice, the Lord removed them both from him and them; justified and acquitted him, and his people in him: and by this means so effectually, and so far, are their transgressions removed, that they shall never be seen any more, nor ever be imputed to them, nor be brought against them to their condemnation; in consequence of which, pardon is applied to them, and so sin is removed from their consciences, as before observed; (see ^{<16121>}Leviticus 16:21 ^{<3007>}Zechariah 3:9).

Ver. 13. *Like as a father pitieth his children*, etc.] When in any affliction, disorder, or distress: the Lord stands in the relation of a Father to his people; they are his children by adopting grace, through the covenant of grace with them; by a sovereign act of his own will he puts them among the children, predestinates them to the adoption of children; and sends his Son to redeem them, that they might receive it, and his Spirit to bear witness to their spirits, that they are his children; and towards these he has all the affections of a tender parent.

So the Lord pitieth them that fear him; not with a servile fear, which is unsuitable to the relation of children; but with reverence and godly fear, with a fear of him and his goodness, and on account of that; a filial fear, such a reverence as children should have of a father: and this character belongs to all the saints of all nations, Jews or Gentiles; and seems to be here given an purpose to include all; and that the divine pity and compassion might not be thought to be restrained to any particular nation. And, as the fruit of his tender mercy, he looks upon his children in their lost estate, and brings them out of it; he succours them under all their temptations; he sympathizes with them under all their afflictions: being full of compassion, he forgives their iniquities; and in the most tender manner receives them when they have backslidden, and heals their backslidings. The Targum in the king of Spain's Bible is,

“so the Word of the Lord pities,”

etc. (see ^{<8045>}Hebrews 4:15).

Ver. 14. *For he knoweth our frame*, etc.] The outward frame of their bodies, what brittle ware, what earthen vessels, they be; he being the potter, they the clay, he knows what they are able to bear, and what not; that if he lays his hand too heavy, or strikes too hard, or repeats his strokes too often, they will fall in pieces: he knows the inward frame of their minds, the corruption of their nature, how prone they are to sin; and therefore does not expect perfect services from them: how impotent they are to that which is good; that they can do nothing of themselves; nor think a good thought, nor do a good action; and that their best frames are very uncertain ones; and that, though the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak. The word used is the same that is rendered “imagination”, (^{<0065>}Genesis 6:5 8:21), and by which the Jews generally express the depravity and corruption of nature; and so the Targum here paraphrases it,

“for he knows our evil concupiscence, which causes us to sin;”

and to this sense Kimchi.

He remembereth that we are dust^{f1437}; are of the dust originally, and return to it again at death; and into which men soon crumble when he lays his hand upon them; this he considers, (see ^{<9388>}Psalm 78:38,39). The Targum is,

“it is remembered before him, that we are of the dust:”

the Septuagint version makes a petition of it, “remember that we are dust”; and so the Arabic version. And we should remember it ourselves, and be humble before God; and wonder at his grace and goodness to us, (^{<01827>}Genesis 18:27).

Ver. 15. *As for man, his days are as grass*, etc.] He himself is like the grass which springs out of the earth; continues on it for a time, and then drops into it; the continuance of the grass is very short, it flourishes in the morning, is cut down at evening, and withers; (see ^{<9905>}Psalm 90:5,6). As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; which denotes the goodness of man, and describes him in his best estate, as possessed of health, riches, honour, and all the gifts and endowments of nature; and yet, with all these, is only like a field flower, exposed to every wind, liable to be cropped by every hand, and to be trampled upon by the beasts of the field; and therefore flourishes not long: so very precarious and uncertain is man in his most flourishing circumstances; (see ^{<2306>}Isaiah 40:6-8).

Ver. 16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone*, etc.] A stormy wind, as the Targum, which tears it up by its roots, or blows off the flower, and it is seen no more; or a blighting easterly wind, which, blowing on it, shrivels it up, and it dies at once; such an one as blasted the seven ears of corn in Pharaoh’s dream, (^{<0423>}Genesis 41:23) or any impetuous, drying, and noxious wind: and so when the east wind of adversity passes over a man, his riches, and honour, and estate, are presently gone; or some bodily distemper, which takes away health, strength, and beauty, and impairs the mind; and especially death, which removes at once into another world.

And the place thereof shall know it no more; the place where the flower grew shall know it no more; or it shall be seen no more in it: so man, when he dies, though he is not annihilated, he is somewhere; he is in another world, either of happiness or woe; yet he is not in this world, in the house

and family, in the station and business he was; he is no longer known nor seen among men on earth; (see ~~<1870>~~ Job 7:10).

Ver. 17. *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him*, etc.] In opposition to the frailty of man, the stability and duration of the mercy of God is observed. This reaches from one eternity to another; it is from everlasting in the heart of God: it appeared in the choice of the vessels of mercy; in the covenant of grace, which is founded upon it, and filled with it; every blessing of which flows from it, and therefore are called the “sure mercies of David”. And it appears in time in the regeneration of God’s elect, which is according to his abundant mercy; in the forgiveness of their sins, which is according to the multitude of his tender mercies; and in their whole salvation, which is by that, and not by works of righteousness; and will endure for ever, for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is unto eternal life. It reaches from the world past to the world to come, as the Targum; and it is so “upon them that fear” the Lord; not with a servile, but a filial fear; a fear of the Lord and his goodness; which only is consistent with the grace and mercy of God, and a sense of it: not that the fear of God is the cause of mercy or grace; but, on the contrary, grace and mercy are the cause of the fear of God; which is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and one of the first things which appear in conversion; but this properly describes the persons who openly and manifestly share in the grace or mercy of God, and to whom he manifests it yet more and more; nor have any reason to believe they are the objects of it, until the true fear of God is wrought in their hearts; and, besides, this character may be given to show that the mercy and grace of God are not limited to the Israelites only, but belong to such of all nations that fear the Lord.

And his righteousness unto children’s children; not the essential righteousness of God, but rather his faithfulness in the performance of his promises, which he will not suffer to fail: the justifying righteousness of Christ is here meant; which is an everlasting one, and is unto and upon all them that believe, in all successive generations; which is meant by the phrase of “children’s children”, even the spiritual seed of Christ, the seed of the church, the seed of Israel; to all and each of which, in every age, the word of God comes, and his promises are fulfilled; and who are justified by and glory in Christ, their righteousness; and who are further described in the next verse, which shows that not the carnal seed of them that fear the Lord are meant.

Ver. 18. *To such as keep his covenant*, etc.] The covenant of grace, which is peculiarly the Lord's covenant, as distinct from man's; and which he keeps himself, and is ever mindful of it. This he makes known to his people at conversion; his secret is with them, and he shows them his covenant; the blessings and promises of it; their interest in them, and in himself, as their covenant God: which they "observe"^{f1438}, as the word here used signifies; and observing it, they lay hold upon it by faith, as belonging to them; and laying hold upon it, they "keep" it as their own, and keep it fast, and will not part with their interest in it for all the world.

And to those that remember his commandments to do them; some read them and hear them, but forget them, at least to do them: these are like a man that beholds his face in a glass, and forgets what manner of man he is; so James compares one that is a forgetful hearer, and not a doer of the word, (⁵⁰²³James 1:23,24). The commandments of God are best remembered, so as to be done, when he puts his laws into the minds of men, and writes them in their hearts, and puts his Spirit within them, to cause them to walk in his statutes, and do them, (²⁸³⁴Jeremiah 31:34 ³⁶²⁷Ezekiel 36:27).

Ver. 19. *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens*, etc.] The heaven is his throne; here he sits enthroned in all the glory of his majesty, with all his attendants upon him, and courtiers about him. The Lord Christ is now in heaven; and where he will continue to the restitution of all things, and from whence his people expect him at the last day. Here he is on the same throne with his divine Father; which throne he has "prepared" or "established"^{f1439}, so as it cannot be moved: when others are cast down, this shall stand; his throne is for ever and ever. The Targum in the king's Bible is, "the Word of the Lord hath prepared, etc."

And his kingdom ruleth over all; over all created beings; over angels, good and bad; over men, righteous and wicked; over the greatest of men, the kings and princes of the earth. Good angels are subject to him devils tremble at him; saints acknowledge him as their King; the wicked he rules with a rod of iron; and kings reign by him, and are accountable to him; (see ⁴²²⁸Psalm 22:28).

Ver. 20. *Bless the Lord, ye his angels*, etc.] For their creation, being made by him; for their preservation, living, moving, and having their being in him; and for their happiness, in which they are continued, owing to their being chosen of God in Christ, and to their confirmation by Christ. These

are always employed in the work of blessing and praising the Lord nor are they in the least backward to it, nor remiss it; nor does this address unto them suppose anything of this kind. The design of the psalmist is only to show how great and good the Lord is; that angels, the more excellent order of creatures, are under obligation to him, and are bound to praise him: and his further view is, to stir up himself and others to this work, from such a consideration, that such noble creatures are employed in the same, and who are further described:

that excel in strength; or, “are mighty in strength”^{f1440}; they are called mighty angels, (^{<5000>}2 Thessalonians 1:7) an instance of the might and power of an angel see in (^{<1285>}2 Kings 19:35). These, not having sinned, have lost nothing of their original strength and power, and therefore must greatly excel fallen man; who is become a very weak creature, and unable to do the will and work of God, which angels are, as follows:

that do his commandments; or “his word”^{f1441}; what he orders to be done: this they do readily and willingly, constantly, perfectly, and completely; (see ^{<4160>}Matthew 6:10).

Hearkening to the voice of his word; they stand before the Lord, waiting his orders; listening with great attention to what he says, and then readily execute it. Or, “at hearing the voice of his word”; that is, as soon as they hear the voice of his word, or hear him speaking^{f1442}, immediately they apply themselves to the performance of it.

Ver. 21. *Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts*, etc.] Which some understand of the sun, moon, and stars, sometimes called the hosts of heaven; and who in their way bless and praise the Lord; (see ^{<6810>}Psalm 148:2,3). Others, of the angels, as before; who are sometimes styled the heavenly host, (^{<4023>}Luke 2:13), and may be so called from their numbers, there being legions of them; and for their military employment, in guarding and protecting the saints, in encamping about them, and fighting for them. Or rather, since these seem to be distinguished from the angels before addressed, by them may be meant the church militant and her members; who are like an army with banners, consisting of volunteer soldiers under Christ, the Captain of their salvation; whose battles they fight against sin, Satan, and the world; and have a great deal of reason to bless and praise the Lord, for all the great and good things he has done to them, and for them.

Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure; so the angels are called, and they do the will of God; what is acceptable to him, and well pleasing in his sight, (~~3007~~ Hebrews 1:7,14). But rather, as distinct from them, the ministers of the Gospel are intended; a name which the preachers of it bear, both in the Old and in the New Testament, (~~2304~~ Isaiah 61:4 ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 4:1), They are ministers of Christ's appointing, calling, qualifying, and sending; and who are employed in his service, in preaching him, his Gospel, and the truths of it; and who do his pleasure, that which is grateful to him, when they speak his word faithfully, declare his whole counsel, and keep back nothing that is profitable: and these have reason to bless the Lord for the gifts bestowed upon them, and for their success and usefulness; and indeed they bear a leading part in giving praise and glory to God, (~~609~~ Revelation 4:9,10).

Ver. 22. *Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion*, etc.] Which some interpret of all his creatures, animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, throughout the whole world, which is all under his government; and who all of them, objectively, bless and praise the Lord, (~~387~~ Psalm 148:7-13). Or rather regenerate persons, his sons and daughters, the work of his hand, in each of the parts of the world where they live, are here called upon to bless the Lord; who, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten them again to a glorious inheritance: these are his workmanship in Christ; formed for himself, his service, and glory; and are under the highest obligations to show forth his praise.

Bless the Lord, O my soul: thus the psalmist ends the psalm as he begun it; not excusing himself by what he had done, nor by calling upon others to this service; knowing that this is constant employment for time and eternity; a work in which he delighted, and was desirous of being concerned in, now and for ever.