

PSALM 139

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 139

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David

This psalm was written by David, when he lay under the reproach and calumnies of men, who laid false things to his charge; things he was not conscious of either in the time of Saul's persecution of him, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him: and herein he appeals to the heart searching and rein trying God for his innocence; and, when settled on his throne, delivered it to the master of music, to make use of it on proper occasions. According to the Syriac title of the psalm, the occasion of it was Shimei, the son of Gera, reproaching and cursing him as a bloody man, (~~1065~~ 2 Samuel 16:5-7). Theodoret takes it to be a prophecy of Josiah, and supposes that he is represented as speaking throughout the psalm. Aben Ezra observes, that this is the most glorious and excellent psalm in all the book: a very excellent one it is: but whether the most excellent, it is hard to say. It treats of some of the most glorious of the divine perfections; omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Arama says, the argument of it is God's particular knowledge of men, and his providence over their affairs.

Ver. 1. *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known [me].*] The omniscience of God reaches to all persons and things; but the psalmist only takes notice of it as respecting himself. God knows all men in general, and whatever belongs to them; he knows his own people in a special manner; and he knows their particular persons, as David and others: and this knowledge of God is considered after the manner of men, as if it was the fruit of search, to denote the exquisiteness of it; as a judge searches out a cause, a physician the nature of a disease, a philosopher the reason of things; who many times, after all their inquiries, fail in their knowledge; but the Lord never does: his elect lie in the ruins of the fall, and among the men of the world; he searches them out and finds them; for he knows where they are, and the time of finding them, and can distinguish them in a crowd of men from others, and notwithstanding the sad case they are in, and separates them from them; and he searches into them, into their most

inward part, and knows them infinitely better than their nearest relations, friends and acquaintance do; he knows that of them and in them, which none but they themselves know; their thoughts, and the sin that dwells in them: yea, he knows more of them and in them than they themselves, (~~247B~~ Jeremiah 17:9,10). And he knows them after another manner than he does other men: there are some whom in a sense he knows not; but these he knows, as he did David, so as to approve of, love and delight in, (~~407B~~ Matthew 7:23 ~~389B~~ 2 Timothy 2:19).

Ver. 2. *Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising*, etc.] Here the psalmist proceeds to observe the particular circumstances and actions of his life, which were known to God; as his “downsitting”, either to take rest, as weary persons do. Schultens^{f1845} explains it of the quiet rest in sleep; this the Lord knew when he betook himself to it, and to whose care he committed himself and family; under whose protection he laid himself down, and on whom he depended for safety, (~~398B~~ Psalm 4:8). Or, since lying down to sleep is afterwards mentioned, this may respect sitting down at table to eat and drink; when the Lord knows whether men use the creatures aright, or abuse them; whether they receive their food with thankfulness, and eat and drink to the glory of God: or else this downsitting was to read the word of God, and meditate upon it; so the Targum paraphrases it,

“my sitting down to study the law.”

When men do this, the Lord knows whether in reading they understand what they read, or read attentively and with affection; whether it is to their comfort and edification, and for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness; whether their meditation on it is sweet, and is attended with profit and pleasure. “Uprising” may respect either rising from bed, when the Lord knows whether the heart is still with him, (~~498B~~ Psalm 139:18); what sense is had of the divine protection and sustentation, and what thankfulness there is for the mercies of the night past; and whether the voice of prayer and praise is directed to him in the morning, as it should be, (~~498B~~ Psalm 3:5 5:3); or else rising from the table, when the Lord knows whether a man’s table has been his snare, and with what thankfulness he rises from it for the favours he has received. The Targum interprets this of rising up to go to war; which David did, in the name and strength, and by the direction, of the Lord;

thou understandest my thought afar off; God knows not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of men, which none but themselves know; by this Christ appears to be truly God, the omniscient God, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, (^{400B}Matthew 9:3,4) (^{501B}Hebrews 4:12). God knows what thoughts his people have of him, and of his lovingkindness in Christ; what thoughts they have of Christ himself, his person, offices, and grace; what thoughts they have of themselves, their state, and condition: he knows all their vain thoughts, and complains of them, and which also they hate; and all their good thoughts, for they come from him. And he knows them “afar off”, or “of old”^{f1846}, even before they are; so Aben Ezra interprets it, a long time past, and compares it with (^{230B}Jeremiah 31:3); where the same word is rendered “of old”: God knows the thoughts of his people, as well as his own, from all eternity; (see ^{230C}Isaiah 25:1); as he knew what they would say and do, so what they would think; he knows thoughts that are past long ago, and forgotten by men, or were unobserved when thought; how else should he bring them into judgment? or though he is afar off in the highest heavens, yet he sees into the hearts of men, and is privy to all their thoughts.

Ver. 3. *Thou compassest my path and my lying down*, etc.] The Targum adds,

“to study in the law.”

His walk in the daytime, and every step he took, and his lying down at night. It denotes his perfect knowledge of all his actions, day and night; he surrounds every path of man, that they cannot escape his knowledge. Or, “thou winnowest”, as some render the word^{f1847}; he distinguishes actions; he discerns and separates the good from the bad, or the goodness of an action from the evil and imperfection of it, as in winnowing the wheat is separated from the chaff. Or, “thou measurest my squaring”^{f1848}; all his dimensions, his length and breadth, as he lay down in his bed;

and art acquainted [with] all my ways; the whole of his life and conversation, all his works and doings: God knows all the evil ways and works of his people; he takes notice of them, and chastises for them; and all their good works, and approves and accepts of them; he knows from what principles of faith and love they spring, in what manner they are performed, and with what views, aims, and ends; (see ^{600B}Revelation 2:2,19) (^{500B}Psalm 1:6).

Ver. 4. *For [there is] not a word in my tongue*, etc.] Expressed by it or upon it, just ready to be spoken; or, as the Targum,

“when there is no word in my tongue:”

so Aben Ezra,

“before it was perfect in my tongue:”

before it is formed there; while it is in the mind, and not expressed, and even before that;

[but], lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether; the whole of it, from whence it springs; the reason of it, what is designed, or the ends to be answered by it. The Lord knows the good words of his people, which they speak to him in prayer, even before and while they are speaking them; and what they say to one another in private conversation, (^{<2654>}Isaiah 65:24 ^{<3016>}Malachi 3:16). See an instance of words known by Christ before spoken, in (^{<2681>}Luke 19:31,33).

Ver. 5. *Thou hast beset me behind and before*, etc.] Art on every side of me, all around me, like one besieged in a strait place; so that there is nothing I can think, say, or do, but what is known unto thee. The two Kimchis, father and son, render the word, “thou hast formed me”: and interpret it of the formation of his body, of which, in (^{<3014>}Psalm 139:14-16); (see ^{<3108>}Job 10:8,10,11) but it denotes how God compasses men with his presence and providence, so that nothing escapes his knowledge;

and laid thine hand upon me; not his afflicting hand, which sometimes presses hard; though the Targum thus paraphrases it,

“and stirred against me the stroke of thine hand:”

but rather his hand of power and providence, to preserve, protect, and defend him. Or it signifies that he was so near to him that his hand was upon him, and he was perfectly known; as anything is that is before a man, and he has his hand upon.

Ver. 6. *[Such] knowledge [is] too wonderful for me*, etc.] Meaning either the knowledge of himself, such as God had of him, which was vastly superior to what he had of himself; and especially the knowledge of other persons and things, whether visible or invisible, in heaven, earth, or hell; things past, present, and to come; or else the manner in which God knew

all this was amazing to him, and quite impenetrable by him; that he did know him, his thoughts, his words and actions, and so those of all others, was easy of belief; but how he should know all this was past his conception, and struck him with the profoundest admiration;

it is high; sublime, out of his reach, beyond his comprehension;

I cannot [attain] unto it; neither to such knowledge, nor to comprehend what it is in God; and how he should have it, and in what manner he exercises it. Kimchi, Jarchi, and Aben Ezra, connect the words with the following, as if the matter of his wonder and astonishment was the omnipresence of God, or where he should find a place to flee from him.

Ver. 7. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit?* etc.] Or, “from thy wind?” which some interpret literally, the wind being God’s creature; which he brings out of his treasures, and holds in his fists, and disposes of as he pleases; this takes its circuit through all the points of the heavens, and blows everywhere, more or less. Rather God himself is meant, who is a Spirit, (~~302~~ John 4:24) not a body, or consisting of corporeal parts, which are only ascribed to him in a figurative sense; and who has something analogous to spirit, being simple and uncompounded, invisible, incorruptible, immaterial, and immortal; but is different from all other spirits, being uncreated, eternal, infinite, and immense; so that there is no going from him, as to be out of his sight; nor to any place out of his reach, nor from his wrath and justice, nor so as to escape his righteous judgment. It may signify his all-conscious mind, his all-comprehending understanding and knowledge, which reaches to all persons, places, and things; compare (~~2403~~ Isaiah 40:13); with (~~6134~~ Romans 11:34 ~~4126~~ 1 Corinthians 2:16); though it seems best of all to understand it of the third Person, the blessed Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son; and who is possessed of the same perfections, of omniscience, omnipresence, and immensity, as they are; who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and pervades them all; and is the Maker of all men, and is present with them to uphold their souls in life, and there is no going from him; particularly he is in all believers, and dwells with them; nor do they desire to go from him, but deprecate his departure from them;

or whither shall I flee from thy presence? which is everywhere, for God’s presence is omnipresence; his powerful presence and providence are with all his creatures, to support and uphold them in being; he is not far from, but near to them; in him they live, move, and have their being; and so there

is no fleeing from him or that; and as to his gracious presence, which is with all his people, in all places at the same time; they do not desire to flee from it, but always to have it; and are concerned for it, if at any time it is removed from them, as to their apprehension of it. Or, “from thy face”^{f1849}; that is, from Christ, who is the face of Jehovah; the image of the invisible God, the express image of his person, in whom all the perfections of God are displayed; and such a likeness, that he that has seen the one has seen the other; he is the Angel of his face or presence, and who always appears before him, and in whom he is seen. Now there is no fleeing from him, for he is everywhere; where God is, his face is: and a sensible sinner desires to flee to him, and not from him; for there is no other refuge to flee unto for life and salvation but to him; and gracious souls desire to be always with him now, and hope to be for ever with him hereafter; they seek him, the face of God, now, and expect to see it more clearly in the world to come.

Ver. 8. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou [art] there*, etc.] No man hath ascended or can ascend to heaven of himself; it is an hyperbolical expression, as are those that follow; none but Christ has ascended to heaven by his own power, who descended from it; saints hope to go there at death, and, when they do, they find God there; that is his habitation, his throne is there, yea, that is his throne; here he keeps court and has his attendants, and here he will be seen and enjoyed by his people to all eternity;

if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou [art there]; which, if understood of the place of the damned, is a place of torment, and a very unfit one to make a bed in, being a lake burning with fire and brimstone; and where the smoke of their torment ascends for ever, and they have no rest day nor night; their worm never dies, and their fire is not quenched; and even here God is: hell is not only naked before him, and all its inhabitants in his view; but he is here in his powerful presence, keeping the devils in chains of darkness; turning wicked men daily into it, pouring out his wrath upon them, placing and continuing an unpassable gulf between them and happy souls: though rather this is to be understood of the grave, in which sense the word is often used; and so Kimchi, Aben Ezra, and Arama, interpret it of the lowest parts of the earth, as opposed to heaven; the grave is a bed to the saints, where they lie down and rest, and sleep till the resurrection morn, (¹⁸⁴²Job 14:12 17:13,16 ²⁵⁷⁰Isaiah 57:2); and here the Lord is watching over and keeping their dust, and will raise it up again at the last day. The Targum is,

“there is thy Word.”

Ver. 9. [*If I take the wings of the morning*, etc.] And fly as swift as the morning light to the east, to the extremity of it, as Ben Melech; as far as he could go that way, as swiftly as the wings of the morning could carry him thither; so the morning is represented by the Heathens as having wings^{f1850}; or as the rays of the rising sun, called wings for the swiftness of them, (^{304B}Malachi 4:2);

[and] dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; in the most distant isles of it, in the farthest parts of the world, the sea being supposed the boundary of it: or “in the uttermost parts of the west”^{f1851}, as opposed to the morning light and rising sun, which appear in the east; and the sea is often in Scripture put for the west, the Mediterranean sea being to the west of the land of Palestine; and could he go from east to west in a moment, as the above writer observes, there would God be. The Heathens represent Jupiter, their supreme god, as having three eyes, because he reigns in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth^{f1852}.

Ver. 10. *Even there shall thy hand lead me*, etc.] For he could not get there with all the assistance of the wings of the morning, could they be had, without the leadings of divine Providence; and when there, being a good man, should experience the leadings of divine grace; let the people of God be where they will, he heads them as a parent his child, teaching him to go; and as a shepherd his flock, into green pastures, and to fountains of living water; he leads to himself, and to his Son by his Spirit; into communion and fellowship with them, and to a participation of all blessings grace; guides them with his counsel, and directs all their ways and going;

and thy right hand shall hold me; the Lord lays hold on his people, and apprehends them for himself, and claims his interest in them; he holds them in his ways, that they slip and fall not; he upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness, and they are safe; and he holds them from going into or on in wrong ways to their hurt.

Ver. 11. *If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me*, etc.] The darkness of a cloud or of the night, so that my actions shall not be seen; that is, if I entertain such a thought in my mind, that what I do in the dark will escape the sight and knowledge of God, and so be emboldened to commit it;

even the night shall be light about me; and make all my works manifest, as light does.

Ver. 12. *Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee*, etc.] Any thing that is done by men in it; or “darkeneth not from thee”^{f1853}, or causeth such darkness as to hinder the sight of any action committed. The Targum is,

“from thy Word;”

(see ^{<3042>}Hebrews 4:12,13);

but the night shineth as the day; or “enlightens as the day”^{f1854}, gives as much light with respect to God as the day does;

the darkness and the light [are] both alike [to thee]; as is the one, so is the other: the day gives him no more light than the night, and the night no more darkness than the day; he sees as well, as clearly and distinctly, in the one as in the other. The psalmist expresses the same thing in different words three or four times, as Kimchi observes, to show that so the Lord is, that thus it is with him; he has as clear a discerning of all things done in the darkest night as at bright noon day; (see ^{<3821>}Job 34:21,22).

Ver. 13. *For thou hast possessed my reins*, etc.] His thoughts and counsels, the reins being the seat of instruction and counsel; hence God is called the trier of the reins, and searcher of the hearts of the children of men; he is the possessor or master of their most secret thoughts, and thoroughly knows them; (see ^{<4909>}Psalms 7:9 16:7); they are also the seat of the affections, which are naturally sinful and inordinate, and set upon carnal and earthly things; but the Lord possesses and engrosses the affections of his people in the best sense, (^{<4925>}Psalms 73:25); moreover the reins are the seat of lust, the bed in which it is conceived and brought forth, and God knows the first motions of it there; and that the imagination of the thought of man’s heart is evil continually, (^{<0105>}Genesis 6:5);

thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb; with the secundine, or afterbirth, in which he carefully wrapped him, a proof of his knowledge of him, and care for him in the womb; or with skin and flesh he covered his bones with as they grew there; (see ^{<1801>}Job 10:11); or the sense is, he protected and defended him in his embryo state, and when ripe for birth took him out from thence, and held him up ever since, (^{<4929>}Psalms 22:9 71:6); he had his eye on him when no other eye could see him, not even his mother that bare him, and before ever he himself saw light. The Targum is,

“thou hast founded me in my mother’s womb.”

Ver. 14. *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully [and] wonderfully made,* etc.] the formation of man is not of himself, nor of his parents, but of God, and is very wonderful in all its parts; it has been matter of astonishment to many Heathens, as Galen and others, who have, with any carefulness, examined the structure and texture of the human body, the exact symmetry and just proportion of all its parts, their position and usefulness; holy every bone, muscle, artery, nerve and fibre, are nicely framed and placed to answer their designed end; particularly the eye and ear, the exquisite make of them for sight and sound, have filled the most diligent inquirers into nature with amazement and wonder, and are a full proof of the wisdom and knowledge of God; see (^{394B} Psalm 94:9); no man has cause to reproach his parents, nor blame the Former of all things for making him thus, but on the contrary should praise the Lord, as David did, who has given him life and breath, and all things; or own and confess^{f1855}, as the word may be rendered, that he is in various surprising instances a wonder of nature; see (^{288B} Isaiah 45:9,10 ^{80B} Romans 9:20 ^{494B} Psalm 100:3). R. Moses in Aben Ezra thinks David is speaking of the first father, or the first Adam; who was wonderfully made of the dust of the earth, and had a living soul breathed into him; was made after the image of God, holy and upright: but rather he speaks of Christ, the second Adam, his antitype, who as man is a creature of God's make, and was wonderfully made, even of a virgin, without the use and knowledge of man; is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, the tabernacle which God pitched and not man; was produced by the power of the Holy Ghost, was born without sin, which no man is, and united personally to the Son of God, and is the great mystery of godliness; and his name is justly called Wonderful, (Is 9:6). Cocceius interprets this passage of God's separating act of David, and so of others in election; which is a wonderful setting apart of than for himself, as the word is used (^{394B} Psalm 4:3); it is the effect of amazing love, and to be ascribed to the sovereignty of God, and the unsearchable riches of his grace; but this seems not to be intended here, though it is a marvellous act, as all the works of God are, as follows; rather, since the word may be rendered, "I am wonderfully separated",^{f1856} it may be interpreted of his being separated in his mother's womb from the rest of the mass and matter of her blood, and formed from thence; which was done in a secret, unknown, and marvellous way and manner;

marvellous [are] thy works; of creation, providence, sustentation of all creatures, the government of the world, the redemption of mankind, the

work of grace and conversion, the perseverance of the saints, and their eternal salvation;

and [that] my soul knoweth right well: having diligently sought them out, and having such a distinct knowledge of them as to be capable of talking of them, and of showing them to others, and pointing out the wonders, beauties, and excellencies of them; (see ^{<49B1D>}Psalm 111:2 145:5 9:1); however, he well and perfectly knew, or knew so much of them that they were very wonderful and amazing: some connect the word rendered “right well”, which signifies “greatly”, or “exceedingly”, not with his knowledge, but with the marvellous works known; and take the sense to be, that he knew them to be greatly or exceedingly wonderful; so R. Moses in Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech.

Ver. 15. *My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret,* etc.] Or “my bone”^{f1857}; everyone of his bones, which are the substantial parts of the body, the strength of it; and so some render it “my strength”^{f1858}; those, though covered with skin and flesh yet, being done by the Lord himself, were not hid from him; nor the manner of their production and growth, which being done in secret is a secret to men; for they know not how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child, (^{<2111B>}Ecclesiastes 11:5); but God does;

[and] curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; or formed in my mother’s womb, as the Targum, and so Jarchi, like a curious piece of needlework or embroidery, as the word^{f1859} signifies; and such is the contexture of the human body, and so nicely and curiously are all its parts put together, bones, muscles, arteries, veins, nerves, and fibres, as exceed the most curious piece of needlework, or the finest embroidery that ever was made by the hands of men; and all this done in the dark shop of nature, in the “ovarium”, where there is no more light to work by than in the lowest parts of the earth. The same phrase is used of Christ’s descent into this world, into the womb of the virgin, where his human nature was curiously wrought by the finger of the blessed Spirit, (^{<411D>}Ephesians 4:9).

Ver. 16. *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect,* etc.] The word^{f1860} for “substance” signifies a bottom of yarn wound up, or any rude or unformed lump; and designs that conglomerated mass of matter separated in the womb, containing all the essentials of the human frame, but not yet distinguished or reduced into any form or order; yet, even when in this state, the eyes of the Lord see it and all its parts distinctly;

and in thy book all [my members] were written: [which] in continuance were fashioned, when [as yet there was] none of them; in the book of God's eternal mind, and designs, the plan of the human body was drawn, all the parts of it described, and their form, places, and uses fixed, even when as yet not one of them was in actual being; but in due time they are all exactly formed and fashioned according to the model of them in the mind of God; who has as perfect knowledge of them beforehand as if they were written down in a book before him, Or "in thy book are written all [of them], what days they should be fashioned"; not only each of the members of the body were put down in this book, but each of the days in which they should be formed and come into order: "when" as yet there was "none of them"; none of those days, before they took place, even before all time; the Targum is,

"in the book of thy memory all my days are written, in the day the world was created, from the beginning that all creatures were created."

Ver. 17. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* etc.] The word ^{f1861} signifies that which is scarce and rare, and not to be attained and enjoyed; (see ^{<0001>}1 Samuel 3:1 ^{<0008>}Psalm 49:8); the thoughts and counsels of God are impenetrable and unsearchable; he knows our thoughts, as Aben Ezra observes, but we do not know his, (^{<0002>}Psalm 139:2); as well as it likewise signifies the worth and value of them; God's thoughts are infinitely beyond ours, and infinitely more valuable and more important, and are concerning our welfare and happiness: it is marvellous that God should think of us at all; it is more so that his thoughts should not be thoughts of evil, to bring that evil upon us we deserve, but thoughts of peace and reconciliation in and by his Son, in whom he was reconciling the world to himself; thoughts of salvation and eternal life, and of the way and means of bringing it about; thoughts to provide for our present supply in this world, and to lay up for us for the world to come; (see ^{<0011>}Jeremiah 29:11 ^{<0017>}Psalm 40:17 31:19). It may be interpreted of the thoughts which David had of God in his meditations of him, which were sweet, precious, and comfortable to him; of his lovingkindness to him, covenant grace, precious promises, and gracious dealings with him; but the former sense seems best. The Targum is,

"to me how precious they that love thee, the righteous, O God!"

and so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it, “thy friends”;

how great is the sum of them! or “the heads of them”; that is, not the chief of thy friends, but the sum of thy thoughts, these in the bulk, in the general, are not to be counted; and much less the particulars of them, these are not to be entered into or described.

Ver. 18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand,* etc.], That is, if I should attempt to do it, it would be as vain and fruitless as to attempt to count the sands upon the seashore, which are innumerable; (⁹¹¹⁵Psalm 11:5). So Pindar says ^{f1862}, that sand flies number, that is, is not to be numbered; though the Pythian oracle boastingly said ^{f1863}, I know the number of the sand, and the measures of the sea; to which Lucan ^{f1864} may have respect when he says, measure is not wanting to the ocean, nor number to the sand; hence geometricians affect to know them; so Archytas the mathematician, skilled in geometry and arithmetic, is described and derided by Horace ^{f1865} as the measurer of the earth and sea, and of the sand without number; and Archimedes wrote a book called *θαμμιτης* ^{f1866}, of the number of the sand, still extant ^{f1867}, in which he proves that it is not infinite, but that if even the whole world was sand it might be numbered; but the thoughts of God are infinite;

when I wake, I am still with thee; after I have been reckoning them up all the day, and then fall asleep at night to refresh nature after such fatiguing researches; when I awake in the morning and go to it again, I am just where I was, and have got no further knowledge of God and his thoughts, and have as many to count as at first setting out, and far from coming to the end of them: or else the sense is, as I was under thine eye and care even in the womb, before I was born, so I have been ever since, and always am, whether sleeping or waking; I lay myself down and sleep in safety, and rise in the morning refreshed and healthful, and still continue the care of thy providence: it would be well if we always awaked with God in our thoughts, sensible of his favours, thankful for them, and enjoying his gracious presence; as it will be the happiness of the saints, that, when they shall awake in the resurrection morn, they shall be with God, and for ever enjoy him.

Ver. 19. *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God,* etc.] Since he is God omniscient, and knows where they are, what they have done, are doing, and design to do; and God omnipresent, at hand to lay hold upon them;

and God omnipotent, to hold them and inflict due punishment on them; this is a consequence rightly drawn from the above perfections of God. Or “if thou wilt slay the wicked”^{f1868}, then, when I awake, I shall be with thee, as Kimchi connects the words; that is, be at leisure to attend to thy works and wonders, and daily employ myself in the contemplation of them, having no wicked persons near me to molest and disturb me. The word is singular in the original text, “the wicked one”; meaning either Saul, who was David’s enemy without a cause, and did very wickedly and injuriously by him, whom he might expect God in due time would take out of the world; though he did not choose to lay his hand on the Lord’s anointed, when he was in his power. Jarchi interprets it of Esau, by whom he means Edom or Rome, in the Rabbinic language, that it, the Christians; if he meant no more than the Papal Christians, he may be much in the right; the man of sin, the son of perdition, the wicked one, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his lips, may be intended, the common enemy of Christ and his cause, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 11:4 ³⁰⁰⁸2 Thessalonians 2:3,8). Though it may design a collective body of wicked men; all the followers of antichrist, all the antichristian states, on whom the vials of God’s wrath will be poured; and even all the wicked of the earth, all Christ’s enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, and none but they; the justice of God will not admit of it to slay the righteous with the wicked, and the omniscience of God will distinguish the one from the other, and separate the precious from the vile;

depart from me therefore, ye bloody men; men guilty of shedding innocent blood, and therefore by the law of God should have their blood shed; such particularly are antichrist and his followers, who deserve to have blood given them to drink, because they have shed the blood of the saints, (⁶⁶⁶Revelation 16:6,7 17:6 18:24); these and such as these the psalmist would have no company or fellowship with, lest he should be corrupted by them, fall into sin, and partake of deserved plagues with them, (⁶⁸⁴Revelation 18:4). Some consider these as the words of God, and in connection with the former, and by way of wish, thus, “O that thou wouldest slay the wicked, O God”^{f1869}; and wouldest say, “depart from me, ye bloody men”; which will be said to the wicked at the last day, and even to such who have made a profession of the name of Christ, (⁴⁰²³Matthew 7:23 25:34).

Ver. 20. *For they speak against thee wickedly*, etc.] Against his being, his perfections, his purposes, his providences, his doctrines, ordinances,

ministers, and people; or “they speak of thee for wickedness”^{f1870}, they made mention of the name of God to cover their wickedness, pretending to fear God and love him, to have a reverence of him and serve him, putting on a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;

[and] thine enemies take [thy name] in vain: either by profane swearing, or by false swearing. The Targum interprets both clauses of swearing deceitfully and vainly; or “he”, that is, everyone that is “lifted up to vanity [are] thine enemies”^{f1871}, whose hearts are lifted up to vanity, idols, riches, self-righteousness, sensual lusts and pleasures; these are the enemies of God, are estranged from him, hold friendship with the world, harbour his enemies, love what he hates, hate what he loves, and commit acts of hostility against him. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, read, “they take thy cities in vain”.

Ver. 21. *Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?* etc.] Wicked men are haters of God; of his word, both law and Gospel; of his ordinances, ways, and worship; of his people, cause, and interest; and therefore good men hate them: not as men, as the creatures of God, and as their fellow creatures, whom they are taught by the Gospel to love, to do good unto, and pray for; but as haters of God, and because they are so; not their persons, but their works; and for the truth of this the omniscient God is appealed unto;

and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? as wicked men do, in their hearts, in their words, and in their actions. They rebel against God, and contend with him, which is folly and madness; and this is grieving to good men, because of their insolence and impudence, the ruin and destruction they expose themselves to, and the dishonour done to God: and this arises from their great love and strong affection for him, not being able to bear such behaviour to him; as a man is filled with grief and indignation when another rises up against his father or his friend; (see ~~119:136~~ Psalm 119:136,158).

Ver. 22. *I hate them with perfect hatred,* etc.] Heartily and really; not in word only, but in deed and in truth; “odio vatiniano”, with consummate hatred: this is an answer to his own question;

I count them mine enemies; being the enemies of God: the friends of God were David’s friends, as angels and good men, and God’s enemies were

his; their friends and enemies, were common; so closely allied and attached were they to each other, as God and all good men are.

Ver. 23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart*, etc.] He had searched him, and knew his heart thoroughly;

try me, and know my thoughts; he had tried him, and knew every thought in him, (^{<400>}Psalm 139:1,2). This therefore is not said for the sake of God; who, though he is the trier of hearts, and the searcher of the reins, is indeed a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart at once, and knows immediately what is in man; and needs no testimony of him, nor to make use of any means in order to know him and what is within him: but David said this for his own sake, that God would search and make known to him what was in his heart, and try him by his word, as gold is tried in the fire; or by anything difficult and self-denying, as he tried Abraham; or by any afflictive providence; or in any way he thought fit to make him acquainted thoroughly with himself. His sense is this, that if he knew his own heart and thoughts, and the inward frame and disposition of his soul, it was as he had expressed it; that he was grieved with sinners, and hated those that hated the Lord, even with a perfect hatred, and reckoned them as his enemies; but if it was otherwise, he desired to be searched and tried thoroughly, that it might be discovered: and he might say this also on account of others, who charged him falsely with things he was not conscious of; that never entered into his thoughts, and his heart knew nothing of, and could not accuse him with; and therefore he appeals to the heart searching God, that he would so lay open things that his integrity and innocence might appear to all; (see ^{<020>}Genesis 22:1,12 ^{<080>}Deuteronomy 8:2 ^{<030>}2 Chronicles 32:31).

Ver. 24. *And see if [there be any] wicked way in me*, etc.] Not that David thought himself free from wickedness, or that there was none to be found in his heart and life; and therefore said this in a boasting way, he knew otherwise; (see ^{<090>}Psalm 19:12,13 119:96); but he is desirous it might be thoroughly looked into and seen whether there was any such wicked way in him he was charged with; as that he had a design upon the life of Saul, and to seize his throne and kingdom, which never entered into his mind, (^{<020>}1 Samuel 24:9). Or, “any way of grief”^{f1872}; what tended to wound and grieve his own soul, or to grieve the hearts of God’s people; or to grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and which he ought to grieve for and repent of: suggesting, that upon the first conviction he was ready to relinquish any

such wicked way, and express his abhorrence of it, and testify true repentance for it. Some render it, “the way of an idol”^{f1873}; because a word from the same root signifies an idol: every carnal lust in a man’s heart is an idol; and whatsoever engrosses the affections, or has more of them than God himself has, or is preferred to him, (^{<2640>}Ezekiel 14:4). The Targum is,

“and see if the way of those that err is me;”

and lead me in the way everlasting; or, “in the way of old”^{f1874}: the good old way, the ancient path, in which the patriarchs before and after the flood walked, Or, “in the perpetual way”^{f1875}; the way that endures for ever; in opposition to the way of the wicked, that perishes, (^{<3006>}Psalm 1:6); or in the way that leads to everlasting life, to eternal peace and rest, and endless pleasures; as opposed to the way of grief and sorrow. It designs Christ, the true and only way to eternal life, the path of faith, truth, and godliness, (^{<4073>}Matthew 7:13,14 ^{<6146>}John 14:6); in which the Lord leads his people, as a father does his child, and as the shepherd his flock. The Jewish commentators, Aben Ezra and Kimchi, interpret it the way of the world; and take it to be the same with the way of all flesh, death, or the grave; which is called man’s world, or home, (^{<6214>}Joshua 23:14 ^{<2116>}Ecclesiastes 12:5); and make the sense to be this: If thou seest any evil in me, take me out of the world; kill me at once, let me die But this seems to be foreign from the text; for the word “lead” designs a blessing or benefit, as Calvin well observes. The Targum is,

“lead me in the way of the upright of the world;”

the way in which upright men walk.